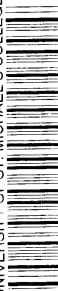


# A MODERN GRIM'S PROGRESS

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# A Modern Pilgrim's Progress



# A Modern Pilgrim's Progress

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
HENRY SEBASTIAN BOWDEN  
OF THE ORATORY



BURNS & OATES  
28 ORCHARD STREET, LONDON, W.  
BENZIGER BROTHERS, NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO



## FATHER BENSON'S PREFACE

TRAVELLERS in all regions usually belong to one of two classes. Either they observe a great deal but cannot describe it intelligently ; or they observe very little, and describe it a great deal. Scientists usually belong to the one ; and Journalists to the other. Yet there is a third class of travellers, and it is through these that knowledge is disseminated.

The author of this book, a traveller through realms that are becoming increasingly well known in these days, belongs without a doubt to this third and exceptional body. She has journeyed as widely, perhaps, as any of her predecessors or followers ; there is hardly a modern philosophy or religion with which she has not had some acquaintance, hardly a position which she has not occupied ; yet she has been a traveller throughout, a "pilgrim and a sojourner," as all wise men are who have not found the abiding city. This book is not in the least a record of one who has changed rapidly from one dogmatic (or negative) position to another, declaring that each in turn is her rest for ever. On the contrary, she is obviously moving all the while ; she never builds a house anywhere ; she but pitches her tent night

by night, looking for that city whose builder and maker is God. And her crowning gift is that she can describe her wanderings.

The first process necessary for all who begin from such origins as she, must be, of course, one of dreary disintegration, a losing hold of truths together with falsehoods, temporary blindnesses that must precede the clear vision. It is a period well known to all who observe the passing of childhood into manhood—a period of unutterable misery experienced by most intelligent persons when they begin for the first time to think for themselves, and find themselves living under an authority that will bear no investigation. Yet, without any doubt, the process is a progressive one, or may be so, if the sufferer does not lose heart altogether. It was so with the author of this book. Her old beliefs passed away, her ideas of Truth and Religion and God crumbled little by little, and for a time there was nothing but desolation around her. Again and again she caught at fragments as they slipped past; yet each evaded her in turn, or broke as she grasped them. So far, her experience was that of most non-Catholics in their search for truth.

The second stage took a less usual form. It is common to hear from those who after long wanderings have come home, that it was this or that philosopher or religious teacher that de-



tained them at this or that stage of their movement. One man is caught fast by Spencer, another by Darwin, a third even by Haeckel; and these teachings had to be shaken off before further progress could be made. But with this pilgrim exactly the opposite process took place. "I learnt this truth from Spencer; that dogma was illuminated for me by Kant; I understood for the first time such and such a point of view of truth from Hegel or Renan." This is an extraordinarily perilous process, of course, and a mind that tended too much towards hero-worship—to submit to persons in preference to ideas—could hardly have escaped free. Yet, where the will is good, and grace is given and received, an escape is possible. It is as if a man temporarily staved off starvation by eating poison-berries, or a death from thirst by drinking brackish water.

It is in this part of the book, I think, that the interest will be found chiefly to lie by those who think rather than feel. The author has an exceptionally strong power of summing up in a sentence or two the various intellectual positions which helped her forward. Not all would be equally so helped. One man uses this stepping-stone, and one another.

The very stone itself, too, may be kicked away in the process of its using; yet it has none the

less done its work legitimately. It was sufficiently stable to bear a momentary weight, but no more. In any case, however, it cannot but be of intense interest, whether or no every step can be logically and finally justified, to learn how another pilgrim crossed this or that obstacle to the firmer ground beyond.

Man, however, does not live by thought alone. It is his whole self that goes forward, heart, imagination, will and emotions, as well as intellect. And here, in what practically corresponds to the third part of the book, we have an amazingly interesting record of how grace works in this warmer part of human nature ; of how the heart, already established on reasonable and intellectual lines by cold processes of thought, gathers up all into itself and waits for, and finally receives, the divine impulse that finishes the work that, in whatever disguise, it originally began. It is here, of course, that criticism is most easy, and most futile. We share certain tracts of knowledge all alike : the exact sciences, at any rate, and the realm of logic are true for all equally ; private opinion in these matters is merely another name for unintelligence. But each of us, in the weightier matters of the law, has a certain uniqueness—bounded indeed by the limits of revelation and authority—yet a real personal individuality distinguished from that of all others. The Creator

has never made a perfect pair in the whole of creation ; still less a complete set identical in all its units. He deals with us, therefore, as He has made us, one by one. Criticism, therefore, of the final personal movements by which a soul passes into that supernatural unity of the Body of Christ (in which, once more, by a divine paradox, she must lose herself if she is to preserve herself)—criticism is merely useless. But an intelligent sympathy may be of the greatest use ; since, though these processes are different for all, there is yet an abundance of analogies between them. We cannot learn to swim except by entering the water ; yet we can gain reassurance, and indeed a certain amount of instruction, by watching the movements of others who have already learned. We may have a thousand arguments against the success of such movements, yet—they succeed.

This third part of the book, therefore, will be of more interest to the psychologist than to the logician. He will learn something of the way in which souls do actually move, even though he may be convinced that they ought not so to move. Yet, somehow, they do it before his eyes ; and so long as the laws of the exact sciences are not transgressed, he has not even a logical right to complain.

The object, however, after all, of the author is not to make a spectacle of herself, even to

the most sympathetic eyes. She has no interest whatever in processes, as such ; and her self-suppression in all points except in those where self-suppression would mean obscurity, is remarkable. Her one desire is to encourage others who are still toiling through the deserts ; or, in all charity, to suggest a reconsideration of their position to those who live serenely on insecure foundations. It appears, of course, the height of arrogance for Catholics to speak in this manner—especially in the eyes of those who, as has been wittily said, have discovered that the Golden Rule is that there is no Golden Rule, and that the supreme Truth is that all is illusion. Yet Catholics cannot speak otherwise. Those who dwell on the Rock cannot honestly, even with the most charitable intentions, pretend that it is only sand. Those who have travelled in tents for twenty years know a house when they see it ; and there is no home-instinct so strong as in those who have long been homeless.

The very confidence, then, of Catholics is one of their credentials ; for from the mouth of the least known and most humble of the Church's children there must always ring an echo of His tones of whom it was said that " He spake as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

ROBERT HUGH BENSON.

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	I

## CHAPTER I

### FIRST UNCERTAINTIES AND EARLY GUIDES

Early impression — Parentage — Religious observance— Sunday dulness—Dawning interest—Paris—First diffi- culties — Who shall interpret?— <i>The Enquirer</i> — The Incarnation . . . . .	23
--	----

## CHAPTER II

### HIGH CHURCH INFLUENCE

High Church influences—The world beyond the grave— Revulsion of feeling—Contradictory teaching—"Salva- tion by scholarship"—Anglican views—Apparent failure of Christ's scheme . . . . .	32
---	----

## CHAPTER III

### THE BIBLE AND BIBLE INTERPRETATION

The Divinity of Christ—Difficulties of biblical interpreta- tion—The Trinity—Doubts of biblical interpretation— Colenso's influence—Torment of doubt—Free think- ing — Desolation — Are right and wrong but empty words? . . . . .	40
--	----

## CHAPTER IV

## A QUONDAM CATHOLIC

	PAGE
First direct Catholic influence—Two alternatives—Infallibility—The wrong choice—The supernatural—The Douay Bible . . . . .	51

## CHAPTER V

## PHILOSOPHIC DOUBT

The study of philosophy—Philosophic doubt—Kant's idealism—The Ego—Individual consciousness—The ethical imperative—Responsibility—Necessity of God .	63
---	----

## CHAPTER VI

## THE LIMITS OF REASON

An insatiable thirst—Proofs of the existence of God—Kant and the Ego—"Critique of Practical Reason"—Domain of the intellect—Self-evident truths—The doctrine of nescience—The problem of the Infinite . . . . .	73
---	----

## CHAPTER VII

## DEEPENING CONVICTIONS

The insufficiency of human reason—God—Freedom and immortality—Reason for belief in the existence of God	81
---	----

## CHAPTER VIII

## GOD AND IMMORTALITY

Immortality—No annihilation—The riddle of life—The shadow of death—The eternal future—The demands of equity—Visit to a convent—Distrust and prejudice—A Catholic church . . . . .	88
---	----

# CONTENTS

xiii

## CHAPTER IX

### MATERIALISM AND EVOLUTION

	PAGE
Evolution—Darwinean theories—God the Eternal Present— The great I AM—Neither materialism nor monism solves the problem—Atheism fails to satisfy—A chamber of horrors—Intelligence and volition—Survival of the fittest . . . . .	97

## CHAPTER X

### SCIENCE AND GOD

The place of creation—Matter and mind—Science and God —Systems of philosophy . . . . .	106
---	-----

## CHAPTER XI

### HERBERT SPENCER

A Catholic friend—Return to England—Herbert Spencer— In the labyrinth—The absolute—A positive unthink- able . . . . .	112
---	-----

## CHAPTER XII

### THEORY AND PRACTICE

Agnostic philosophy—Self-interest—Spencer and Kant— The categorical imperative—"A few capital letters" .	120
---	-----

## CHAPTER XIII

### PRACTICAL NEEDS

The Heart's reasons—Eternal purpose—A personal God— Anthropomorphism—Love and adoration—Need of a religion—Quest of revelation . . . . .	129
--	-----

## CHAPTER XIV

## HIGH CHURCH, LOW CHURCH, BROAD CHURCH, NO CHURCH

Search for revelation—Knowledge of necessary truths—	PAGE
Broad Church—Canon Liddon—Theistic worship—A	
make-believe—Virtue or vice? . . . . .	138

## CHAPTER XV

## FROM BUDDHA TO CHRIST

Professor Zerffi—Ancient Egyptian beliefs—Pathah the Re-	
vealer—Hindu theories—Fletcher <i>versus</i> Christ—Clif-	
ford—Blind irrational will—Godless existence . . . . .	146

## CHAPTER XVI

## DAWNING LIGHT

Father Gordon—Catholicism—Helpers of the Holy Souls—	
Trinity—Unity in variety . . . . .	161

## CHAPTER XVII

## CATHOLIC CLAIMS AND CREDENTIALS

Light in Catholic teaching—The doctrine of the Blessed	
Trinity—Divine love—Subject and object—Divine pur-	
pose . . . . .	172

## CHAPTER XVIII

## UNITY IN VARIETY—THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Unity of the Catholic Church—Catholic Catechism—Need	
of certitude—A hundred sects—A wish not to believe	
—A vague deism <i>versus</i> a definite Catholicism—Catholic	
triumphs—Charmed life of the Church—Infallibility—	
Out of the mouth of babes . . . . .	179



# CONTENTS

xv

## CHAPTER XIX

### GROPING FOR LIGHT WITH HALF-CLOSED EYES

PAGE

Parliament of the believing world—Indecision and inconstancy—Doubt and hesitation—Is the unity real?—The question tested—The practice of Christianity—Mgr. Capel—The world's hatred of Catholicism . . .	192
--	-----

## CHAPTER XX

### APPEAL TO MR. MACKONOCHIE AND DR. PUSEY

Ritualism — Mr. Mackonochie—Dr. Pusey — Church of England—"Branch Churches"—Claims of Anglicanism —Dr. Pusey and the Eucharist . . .	202
--	-----

## CHAPTER XXI

### A VISIT TO NEWMAN

Dr. Littledale's scarecrow—A visit to Cardinal Newman—Meeting between the Cardinal and his brother Francis —The worship of sorrow—Catholic evolution . . .	215
--	-----

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE PILGRIM IN PARIS

The Pilgrim in Paris—The unity of the Church—French logic—An infinite bridge—The Sacrifice of the Mass . . .	227
--	-----

## CHAPTER XXIII

### A HEAVEN-SENT GUIDE

A Dominican preacher—Science and faith—Conversion . . .	235
---	-----

## CHAPTER XXIV

## IN SIGHT OF HOME

Temptations—The rights of reason—Limits of reason—A reasonable faith—Liberty . . . . .	PAGE 241
---	-------------

## CHAPTER XXV

## NEW LIGHT ON OLD PUZZLES

New light on old puzzles—The Incarnation—Christ—The Church—Infallibility . . . . .	252
---	-----

## CHAPTER XXVI

## GROWING ILLUMINATION

The moral personality of the Church—a living Teacher—The prerogatives of Mary—The Pope—The Blessed Sacra- ment . . . . .	258
--	-----

## CHAPTER XXVII

IN PETER'S BOAT I REACH THE SHRINE AND FIND  
TRUTH AND FREEDOM

Miracles—Love of God—Reception into the Church—Free- dom from intellectual slavery—Peace—Light and Liberty . . . . .	271
---	-----

# A Modern Pilgrim's Progress

## INTRODUCTION

THE following work is in no way an echo or adaptation of Bunyan's Allegory, but a narrative of experiences gained in search for the Truth. For the genuineness of those experiences and the actuality of the writer we can vouch of our own knowledge, and the personal element throughout the story adds much to its interest.

The Pilgrim of these pages accompanied her family to a distant Colony at an early age and there imbibed the vigour and independence of thought, the breadth of view and promptitude of action, which would seem to be the peculiar inheritance of a new and developing country. With us, public opinion has such power that the latest current theory is readily adopted, as most men are content,

like Poyntz, "to think as every blessed fellow thinks." The theories themselves are set forth each in their turn as the complete and final solution of every difficulty, and are accepted as oracular. The extent to which this dogmatism is carried may be seen in the handbooks and primers of popular science. In those works the idea of an intelligent Creator is treated as a thing of the past, and the crudest materialism as a self-evident truth. Many of us will remember how a writer of acknowledged excellence in the field of literature ostentatiously spelt "God" without a capital letter, because belief in a Deity had been simply extinguished in the blaze of modern science. However much faith in a Divine teacher may have decayed, the readiness to believe in a modern prophet is beyond dispute.

From this mental servility our authoress was fortunately free. She indeed consults the oracles, and is for a time dazed and bewildered by their utterances, but she does not finally worship at their shrines. She retains her freedom of thought, in other words her common sense, and asks if what she hears is true. She looks about for an answer to each theory pro-

posed, and records what after examination seemed to her a satisfactory reply. In the whole account of her "progress" she lays no claim, as she is anxious to state, to originality either in thought or expression. She but tries to place before us the stepping-stones which have helped herself. The difficulties she feels, the means suggested for solving them, the conclusions eventually reached, are then none of them new, but they serve to show the effects of each new system on her mental and moral dispositions as she proceeds in her search. The extent of her reading and her grasp of its contents reveal considerable intellectual power, while her thoughts are expressed in clear forcible language and at times with great depth of feeling. That so anxious an inquirer after truth should remain so long in doubt and uncertainty may strike us with surprise. But an explanation is found in the eclectic mode of inquiry which she pursued, her ingrained prejudice and rooted aversion to the idea of submission to authority.

We will now touch on such points of her story as may fall within a prefatory notice.

Her first impressions of religion were ob-

tained when she sat as a child in a high-walled pew in a village church, and the dreariness of the service within was only equalled by the dulness of the Sunday without. She was blessed, however, with good parents, and learned from them whatever piety she then possessed. At the age of fifteen she left England with her family, and in her new home soon came in contact with clergymen of very opposite opinions. The Low Church section taught her to trust the Bible alone; the High Church to find her rule of faith in the Prayer Book and the Fathers. A personal encounter between a clergyman who wished to baptize a child and the Baptist father of the child who refused to permit the baptism, brought before her the difficulties of the "Bible alone" theory. The Gospel command was to "believe and be baptized," and how could an infant believe? There must be some authority to explain the Bible, but where to find it she knew not. As to the Prayer Book and the Fathers, the former was interpreted she knew in two opposite senses, and the study of patristic folios was beyond her power. Under these circumstances *The Enquirer*, a Unitarian paper, fell into

her hands, and its continuous perusal sapped her already doubtful belief. She had never had any clear idea of the Incarnation, and she now began to regard Christ as a mere man indwelt by the Divine Spirit. She however received Anglican Confirmation, though somewhat unwillingly, and gave herself to Church work, but at the same time entered on a course of reading of Colenso, Strauss, Renan, Matthew Arnold, and other rationalistic writers. These works shattered her belief in the Bible, while her trust in Anglicanism had been already overthrown by the palpable contradiction in a body which Christ had promised should be one.

So far her knowledge of Catholicism had been learned from Protestant sources, and she regarded the Church as the embodiment of priestcraft and superstition. A new view of the matter was now, however, presented by a speech chanced upon in a back number of *The Enquirer*. The speech was by the Rev. R. Suffield, once a Catholic priest. He had become a Unitarian minister, and in this latter capacity had delivered the speech in question, which is indeed remarkable both as regards

the speaker and the matter itself. It is given in extenso at page 52. The speaker's contention is that Catholicism and Unitarianism are the only logical alternatives. Mysteries surround us, and they increase evermore, however much we may cast off our belief, even to Atheism itself. In this darkness man naturally and reasonably looks for light; that light is offered by the Infallible Church, and she presents her credentials, her Unity, Sanctity, Universality, and Vitality in support of her claims. Rome, too, is the Home of the Supernatural. All her doctrine and devotions flow necessarily from the Incarnation, the doctrine of eternal punishment not excepted. An infinite sacrifice can be required only if Man is to be saved from an infinite loss. Bow then to authority and accept all, or reject authority and claim entire freedom. Our Pilgrim was much impressed by Mr. Suffield's speech, and admitted the logical superiority of the Catholic claims to all others. But her deep-rooted prejudices and hatred of authority made, as she says, the risk of Hell preferable to chaining herself to the tyrannical soul-enslaving Creed of Rome.



She now embarked on the eddies and whirlpools of modern science and philosophies, and was tossed about like a cork on their waves. The only school of Philosophy likely to have assisted her was, as we think, the Scholastic, but this she left unnoticed, according to the fashion of the day. She acknowledges her indebtedness to Kant, but she could never bring herself to believe that the external world was only phenomena or phantoms, or herself but the "shadow of a shade." From her conviction of the objective reality of things and her certainty of her own personality, the principles of causality and design were necessarily inferred, and her adhesion to these primal truths saved her from becoming a Materialist or an extreme "Darwinian." Progressive evolution from bare matter up to thought and will must have been initiated by intelligence and volition. The law of natural selection could not explain everything, for who gave the law? It was the Indian Fable again of the world and the tortoise. She held strongly to Kant's "Categorical imperative," and though, as taught by him the law is autonomous, she deduced from it happily, but as we think illogically, the necessity of a lawgiver

and the fact of her own freedom and responsibility.

To one with such convictions agnosticism appeared to be destructive of a code of ethics in any universal and binding sense, and determinism seemed an excuse for any offence. Incredible too, appeared Spencer's theory, that our conduct is predetermined by "the distribution of unthinking forces in the Solar system," while personal experience taught that under the pressure of temptation "the interests of the social organism" were a poor defence, and that the thought of God and of a future state were the only restraining motives. Still her mind was in chaos as regards any definite faith, and her will was in consequence found wanting in its contest against evil. Her endless speculations, which must be read to be appreciated, had brought about the one effect, and unrestrained disorderly desires for present happiness had produced the other. This the following striking passage shows—"I longed for perfect happiness, but whenever I thought I had grasped it, it died, as dies the day in this southern clime, where twilight is unknown. With all the fierce intensity of an undisciplined nature

I longed for an undying love, while death and inconstancy warned me that on earth it was not attainable." Her darkness and misery were indeed great, and the thought of self-destruction did not present itself, only because she was too young to be tired of life, and shrank with horror from the thought of death.

Light at length came, and from its one source. "I had thought it clever," she says, "to pick to pieces the religion of my childhood, but it was not utterly destroyed. I had always prayed, and at times for hours, in seasons of danger and difficulty." The idea of a personal God increased with the recognition of her moral needs. The objection that personality implies limitation did not seem of much weight. Finite creatures have necessarily finite subsistences. But a Being, of whom infinitude is predicated, must have infinite subsistence, and the agnostics themselves ascribe to the Unknown infinitude as regards causality and power. We find our Pilgrim now returned to England still in great depression, and endeavouring to drown thought by amusements and society. In the midst of her frivolities she, however, continued her studies, and on returning from a dance would read till

daybreak. Her quest was now pursued in the various Anglican Churches, High, Low, and Broad, and among esoteric creeds. But St. George's Hanover Square, St. Alban's Holborn, and Dean Stanley's teaching were alike disappointing. Mr. Voysey's Theistic services seemed a solemn farce, for why should there be prayer if prayer could exert no influence on God? Canon Liddon alone of Anglican clergymen seemed to have been of help, and among Catholic writers Dr. W. G. Ward's replies to J. Stuart Mill on science, free will, and miracles, were found logical and convincing. Her last eclectic excursion seemed to have been to Dr. Zerffi's lectures on Buddhism, and "its connection with Christianity was expounded with the intense bigotry and narrow-mindedness so common to the freethinker." The alleged resemblance of Christianity, Buddhism, and early Egyptian cults was taken to prove the purely human origin of all religions. Our Pilgrim, on the contrary, found that the fact, if true, testified to the existence of a primal divine revelation, universally diffused but obscured and corrupted in time, and as an argument told rather for than against Christianity.

The discordant doctrine of Anglican ministers and the conflicting systems of modern philosophers, compared with the clearness and unity of Catholic doctrine, presented now the contrast of Babel and Jerusalem, the city of confusion and the city of peace. The continued vitality of the Church was all the more wonderful if half the scandals imputed to her rulers and people were true. History, too, witnessed to her wonderful prudence in refusing to identify herself with popular theories, however much they might be in the ascendant, seeing that these theories were so frequently shown at a later time to be unfounded or untrue. On the other hand, her own dogmatic definitions promulgated through the long ages had never been modified, retracted, or found mutually opposed.

Nevertheless our Pilgrim had been her own mistress so long that the idea of submission to authority was still hateful to her. To be told "thou shalt" or "thou shalt not" made "every nerve in her body tingle in revolt." And the sight of Cardinal Manning's signature on a Lenten Indult, hurt like a blow. So the Church remained to her as a wonderful organisa-

tion for the propagation of certain truths, not the living oracle of the Holy Spirit. Recourse was now had to Dr. Pusey for a rule of faith. The Prayer Book and the Fathers, he wrote, had taught him, J. Keble, and the rest, the whole truth. But as that same Prayer Book had taught others an opposite set of doctrines, this did not seem satisfactory. Again his objection to the decree of Papal infallibility, on the ground that a new definition implied an addition to the faith, and the faith is admittedly unchangeable, seemed to come strangely from one who accepted the three creeds and four first councils with all the additions they contain. A second inquiry received a curt rebuke for the writer's "sad irreverences," though later again she received from Dr. Pusey kindness, but little real assistance. A visit to Cardinal Newman followed. He spoke neither of ancient documents nor historic difficulties, but of the voice of conscience as testifying to both the liberty of man and the existence of an eternal Authority, who had the right to impose moral obligations. His frank admission of difficulties, together with his firm faith in the one All-holy God,

and his thankfulness for being a Catholic, showed that difficulties do not necessarily beget doubt.

Our Pilgrim now sought Paris. The evil to be seen in that city had been advanced as an argument against Catholicism. The object lessons there presented of unrestrained materialism showed her indeed what a Godless world might be, but Paris had a better side. Visits to the churches and Catholic worship manifested the nearness of God to the believing soul. The Incarnation and the Holy Eucharist were the only bridge between the finite and the Infinite. At length when present at Benediction, the hour of Grace struck, she put herself in the hands of a Dominican Friar, Père Etienne, was instructed, received, and found peace.

Such is the story in brief of this Pilgrim's Progress. It shows that faith is not the result of eclectic inquiry or the reward of dialectical skill. If God has spoken, His revelation can be learnt only through its appointed channel, the visible human authority chosen to speak in His name. The claims of that authority must be tested with the aid of grace, not so

much by the nature of its teaching, as by the evidence it presents in its own behalf. That evidence, or the external proofs of revelation, are found in certain supernatural facts, miracles and prophecies, above all the Resurrection, while the Church itself, in its more than human origin and its continued vitality, is at once a moral miracle and a prophecy age by age fulfilled.

These proofs are adapted to the intelligence of all, but the evidence though certain is not compulsory. We see now through a glass darkly. Faith is essentially obscure, and the assent of Faith is meritorious precisely because it is free and voluntary and not necessitated like that of the demons "who believe and tremble." The amount of proof given is sufficient to convince the inquirer, duly disposed by contrition and humility, to hear the voice of God, but is sufficient only then. Grace then is imperatively needed, not only for the illumination of the intellect, but also for the co-operation of the will. Without grace there will be neither the due dispositions, the desire to believe required in preparation for the assent, nor the qualities essential to the assent itself. That assent must be far beyond what



any evidence or reasoning could evoke, it must be irrevocable and "super omnia," yielded solely in homage to God, speaking "the obedience of the Gospel," as St. Paul calls it. The merit of this submission is seen in the reward promised—Eternal Life—for faith informed by charity supernaturalises the whole man and unites the Soul to God in its last end. The important part performed by the Will shows how moral defects obstruct the search for faith and facilitate its loss.

The Pilgrim was not a Catholic. The progress of her pilgrimage, though erratic and self chosen, was from darkness to light. She was constantly groping towards that truth which she knew she had never possessed, and in so doing she was discharging a rigorous obligation. The Catholic on the contrary possesses the truth, and inquiry on his part, conducted not with the view to removing difficulties, but with the view of testing the actual verity of revealed dogmas, shows, as Cardinal Newman says, that his faith is already lost. He has deliberately doubted the truth of God's work and has preferred his own reason as the most trustworthy authority. Faith, then, has to be

guarded against every possible temptation to doubt. Yet how often and how recklessly do Catholics, in a spirit of mere levity or from a vain curiosity to know the opinions of the day, read books in science, history, philosophy or fiction that are professedly rationalistic, and this with scarce a knowledge of so much as the Catechism itself, and with little or no attempt to find answers for the objection raised. Suppose also, as is not uncommon, that the discipline of the Church galls with its Sunday Mass, and Friday abstinence, and laws on marriage and education, and that the Sacrament of Penance is dreaded as a humiliating self-accusation, what an unspeakable relief to find that all that may be cast aside! How consoling to learn that the Decalogue was a temporary Mosaic enactment, and is no longer in force; that the Church discipline is but a human ordinance; that so called grievous sins are but the irresistible promptings of nature; that miracles are impossible, for the laws of the universe are unchangeable; that the Gospels are by no means historic narratives but rather emotional legends of a date later than that of the Apostles, products of a gradually growing belief in

Christ's Divinity; that future retribution is a mediæval myth; and that all this and much more is taught by men who hold the foremost place in learning, research, and science, who are very pioneers of thought, masters before whom all others bow. What wonder, then, is it that the light of faith dies out and that all arguments in its favour are found worthless! The doubter has chosen his part, the chains of superstition are broken, he is now enlightened and free.

For those who feel inclined to repine at the yoke of faith and to yearn for the spurious liberty of free thought, the Pilgrim's experiences may serve as a warning. The indulgence to the full of this vaunted freedom wrought in her soul an aching void, an agony of doubt, a very "inferno" of despair. That these effects do not always immediately follow is no argument against the inevitable result. As long as life lasts, temporal interests, occupations, amusements may exclude thoughts of the future, just as a spendthrift may continue his excesses till his capital is exhausted. But as destitution and misery necessarily set in with empty coffers, so when things of sense have ceased to be and

time and space are gone, the soul possesses the one object which remains, and for which it was created, or it does not. If that object be lost, and lost for ever, by the creature's personal act, then begins an undying remorse incomparably exceeding all mental torments here. The loss is infinite and the pain in proportion. The Proto-Agnostic, as he was called, was asked his opinion about a future state and its conditions. He replied that if by a future state was meant the continued duration of life, as we know it here, with its pains, regrets, and sorrows, it could only be led "*inter mœnia flammantia*"—"within burning walls."

Lastly, in her persevering search and mental toil, our Pilgrim furnishes a further lesson. We are left in life only for one object, "to grow into the stature of the perfect man." There is no standing still, we are "*aut vitis aut ignis*"—the branch or the brand. Unless we grow we wither. That growth is in knowledge of the truth, for truth actuates, develops, and perfects reason, as sight does the eye; and as the eye grows blind if kept in darkness, so reason becomes blurred, unilluminated by truth. The confusion of thought, the vagueness of ideas,

and the consequent obscurity of expression now so common, are due to the subjective idealism, the fashion of the day. Nothing is certain here or hereafter. The first principles of reason and the laws of thought are merely conventional expressions, and God, Religion, Morality, the Soul, but relative terms. Paradox meets with applause, and to doubt is the highest wisdom.

Now it is the privilege of Catholics to possess infallible truth, and so be able to advance continually in its saving knowledge. Theology represents the conclusions drawn by reason on revealed premises, and is the product of the learning and philosophy of East and West, of the Fathers, Schoolmen, Doctors of all times. By this sacred science the Church explains the truths committed to her charge, and confirms and develops the faith of her children. "*Qui custodit Israel nec dormit neque dormitat.*" "The Guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps," and the Church's vigilant custody of the faith is seen in the religious instructions of the Faithful by Catechism, sermons, doctrinal works of all kinds. In England now, Catholic publications in the vernacular increase continuously in science, historical research, philosophy,

theology, and the excellence of these works is recognised on all sides. Yet how much are they read? Classics in every tongue are ours, and handbook translations abound from St. Augustine, St. Thomas, Dante, and Bossuet, yet are they mostly unknown. The same may be said of the "Celestial poetry of the lives of the Saints." The excuse for this neglect is the lack of interest such reading is said to afford. But this insipidity is due not to the matter itself, but to vitiated palates. Those who live on confectionery cannot assimilate solid food, and the continuous consumption of frivolous or unhealthy literature destroys intellectual taste for sound or serious reading and begets a mental atrophy. If only the importance of the subject be realised and the first difficulties faced, the reward soon comes. The mere attempt well directed, to penetrate into the truths of faith itself, illuminates the mind and enkindles higher desires. Questioning or inquiring under proper guidance, as Dante says, is "the shoot of truth," by which we mount from ridge to ridge, till the summit is gained. A Catholic well instructed in the faith stands on a vantage ground of his own. By

the principles he holds he has an intuitive grasp of truth, and can detect falsehood or fallacies, however plausibly advanced. He is not disturbed by the cries in the market-place, nor are his convictions shaken by the objections that assail him day by day. What he holds is his own, and he holds it dearer than life. He will have his periods of darkness and gloom; but his will is fixed, and he grows in wisdom as he waits for the light. The eyes of Beatrice became brighter and her smile more radiant as each ascent through the Heavens was gained, and Dante's experience is ours, as truth is sought below. Things of earth fade away, the voices of men grow fainter and fainter, the world itself disappears in the distance, and God alone, the absolute truth and the only good, becomes the one reality. Such, in truth, this so-called "dry" subject proves. "When sought it is ever sweeter, and when found is ever sought." The words of the sage are realised anew. "Those who eat me shall still hunger and those who drink me shall yet thirst" (Ecclus. xxiv. 29).

HENRY SEBASTIAN BOWDEN.

## CHAPTER I

### FIRST UNCERTAINTIES AND EARLY GUIDES

It is hard for me to describe my passage from darkness and doubt to light and certitude; from the eager search after Truth to its final possession. Difficult indeed to leave even in thought the calm happiness of the present for the stormy periods of the past; the rock on which I now stand, for the quicksands which well-nigh engulfed me. Still, I will tell my tale as best I can.

It is on the plastic mind of early childhood that indelible impressions are stamped. The child receives them unconsciously, and they remain; it is therefore necessary, in order to make clear what follows, that I should give you some idea of my early surroundings.

My father was the younger son of an English family; my mother was of Scotch descent. My father's religious views were very broad; I think he considered Dean Stanley a true ex-



ponent of Christianity. My mother was an Anglican of the Low Church type, one of those Evangelicals whose personal love for Our Lord draws them nearer to the Catholic Church than many whose dogmatic creed and external ritual are less at variance with it.

The mutual love of my parents and their affection for their children were to me the first faint reflection of the love of God for us: my father's equity first taught me to honour justice, and his hatred of meanness and falsehood made me love truth. His pity for the weak and oppressed foreshadowed in my mind the conception of the compassion of God for suffering humanity, and in the light of my mother's unselfish life there first dawned on me the beauty and the power of that spirit of self-sacrifice which had 'ts supreme realisation in the Cross of Christ.

I was one of a family of twelve, who were all brought up in the "knowledge and fear of the Lord." No day passed without family prayers; no Sunday without attendance at the village church; the time spent in church was very dreary; I would not have stayed away, yet church-going was a weariness.

In the big, roomy, four-square pew with its high, straight walls, over which I could not see, my feelings resembled those of a playmate of mine, whose ambition to go to church being realised for the first time, looked round in bewildered surprise, and at last said quite audibly, in a puzzled tone, "*Somehow*, mamma, I'm not amused." I felt I ought to like going to church, yet did not.

Sunday is a dull day for most Protestant children, and so it was to me, but in my case there were alleviations; my mother herself taught us our Sunday lessons, and these therefore we dearly loved. In the afternoon my father took us out for a walk through the shrubberies or to a little waterfall in the grounds. For the rest, the day was dull enough. Play was forbidden, story-books set aside, and none but a Sunday magazine allowed. A main feature of the stories in this magazine was that drunken and irreligious parents were reformed by their pious children.

These tales roused in me a bitter sense of injustice, and I shed many tears to think that my parents needed no reformation, so that my legitimate sphere of usefulness was denied me.

I think children begin to puzzle about religion much earlier than grown-up people deem possible. I can remember that when but a tiny mite I used to mix up religion with my fairy tales, and wonder why God, if He really wanted me to be good, did not send some one like "Jack" to kill the giant-devil who so often made me naughty; all such memories are, however, very vague, and my first definite Catholic impressions were received when I was about eleven years old. We were staying at the house of an aunt, who lived in Half-moon Street. I distinctly remember my father saying to my mother one Sunday, "I have heard a good sermon to-day; it was to the effect that the Reformation was a mistake, and that England would have been better without it." In a shocked tone my mother exclaimed, "Hush! remember the children." We were sent to the schoolroom and heard no more. But I pondered over this strange saying.

That same afternoon I for the first time entered a Catholic church. I had been somewhere with my mother's French maid, and passing the little church in Portman Street, we went in. I do not think any service was going

on, but the altar was ablaze with lights and flowers, and I suppose there was Exposition. That night when our old nurse came to tuck me up in bed and say good-night, I said to her, "Chapui, I wish I was a Catholic." I do not remember her answer, nor do I know whether my father's remark or the lights and flowers had prompted the desire, but I remember clearly the incident. Next morning the impression seemed to have gone.

Some time after this we went to live in Paris. Hitherto we had been educated at home; my father, indeed, always objected to school life for girls. But now circumstances rendered a change necessary, and we were sent for a while to a school kept by an English lady in whom my parents had great confidence. At this school religious instruction was given every Thursday by Mr. Gardiner, the clergyman of the English Church in the Rue Marboeuf, an extremely good man of the Low Church type, with an intense horror of Popery. He took a great interest in us, and grounded us thoroughly in Anglican doctrine; but it was Miss Edwards, an English teacher, who made our religion a reality. She was what was then called High Church, though

nowadays High-Churchism means something very different. She taught us to make religion the motive power of life, and inculcated external reverence as well as internal piety. She is one of the best women I have ever known; and to her I owe a deep debt of gratitude.

This much have I related of my earliest life to make clear what follows. For the rest it will suffice to say that when I was about fifteen we left England and went out to a British colony, and that my education was carried on in my own home by governesses, who exercised no direct influence on my religious opinions.

After we were settled in my new home I came in contact with clergymen of divergent views, and gradually I began to be troubled by religious difficulties. My Anglican teachers did not agree among themselves. The doctrines of the High and Low Church clergymen were not only at variance, but contradictory. I listened eagerly to the discussions of those who came to the house, and many questions were argued, in my hearing. I was too young, they thought, to be influenced by their discussions; too young to understand, far too young to know such a thing as religious difficulty. But I

buried the difficulties in my heart, and anxiously flew to the pages of the Bible to solve them. The Bible, I was taught, contained all things necessary to salvation, and the whole truth was to be found therein. But the reading of it only bewildered me the more by opening even wider issues.

As time went on the contradictory doctrines taught by the Church of England and the conflicting views of High, Low, and Broad Church clergymen perplexed me sorely. Sometimes I was too absorbed by other pursuits to worry about them, but at other times they troubled me a good deal.

"Take the Bible; judge for yourself; but if you arrive at a different conclusion from mine, you will be damned." That was the embodiment of the rule of faith given to me. At one time I interpreted a text literally, at another spiritually, but at no time could I feel sure that my interpretation was correct. For many things, indeed, in which I had been taught to believe, I found no certain warrant in the Bible. On one occasion the clergyman of our parish asked me to drive him in my little pony cart to see a Baptist named Jennings, whose

child he wished to baptize. When we reached the house, Jennings said that if the clergyman could prove the necessity of infant baptism from the Bible he might baptize the child, but not otherwise. The clergyman tried and failed. A fierce argument ensued, of which the Baptist had the best, and more than ever it set me thinking. Question followed question, and all was perplexity. As time went on I read every religious book on which I could lay my hands, and the result was a strange conglomeration of ideas. "Believe and be baptized" was the command. How could a baby believe? Wherefore then infant baptism? Why did I keep the first day of the week holy, when God himself commanded me to keep the seventh, which day also Christ himself observed? Again, by what authority did I eat of "things strangled and with blood," when they are most solemnly forbidden in both Old and New Testaments? I believed the Bible to be God's Word, and I felt that He must have made His meaning clear; yet that meaning I could not see, and I groped on in darkness.

Years passed. *The Enquirer*, a Unitarian paper, fell into my hands and fascinated me. I

read number after number, and each succeeding number deepened the impression the first had made. Then, as I lay awake at night, I asked myself, "Can it be true that Christ was merely man and not God?" Frightened at the thought, I put it from me, although, to tell the truth, I do not think I had ever really believed Him to be God. I had always been taught that He was Divine; but to enter into the meaning of the Incarnation, to worship the Babe in the manger, as Catholic children do, I had never learned. Yet for me there was an immense gulf between the teaching I had received and the views advocated by *The Enquirer*, and I was too horrified at the thought of becoming a Unitarian to allow the doubts to mature in my mind. My creed was that unconsciously held by many Protestants who yet believe themselves to be Trinitarians. I thought of Christ as a man indwelt by the Divine Spirit, yet I never thought of the helpless Babe of Bethlehem as actually God. I never realised that it was her God who lay in Mary's arms, day by day, her God who lived with her for thirty-three years and was subject to her. I never thought of that flesh as



Divine which was circumcised, scourged, and crucified for us. I rather looked on Christ as one whose body was human and whose soul was Divine. I "knew my Bible," as the saying goes, but I had no true idea of the Incarnation. The views I then held were not so widely separated from those of the older school of Unitarians, as are the High from the Low Church views of the present day. Still, though I longed to go on reading *The Enquirer*, I thought it would be very wicked to do so, and refrained; I struggled against the new ideas that surged in upon me, and I thought that I had completely crushed all passing doubts. Indeed, at this time these doubts took no definite shape. Still, the seed was sown, and subsequent events caused it to fructify.

## CHAPTER II

### HIGH CHURCH INFLUENCE

ABOUT this time I came into close contact with Archdeacon Evod, a High Church clergyman, who taught me Latin and mathematics, making my lessons serve as an opportunity for many an instruction in Christian doctrine. Ultimately he invited me to join confirmation classes which he was holding, and his goodness and sincerity had so deeply impressed me that though I had hitherto refused to be confirmed, and though every effort to find a legitimate basis for belief had resulted in bewilderment, I consented. My mother and all the best people I knew believed in orthodox Christianity; it was surely naught but my own sinful pride that caused me to doubt the orthodox creed. Accordingly to the confirmation classes I went, in the hope of getting help out of the slough of difficulties into which I had fallen.

Archdeacon Evod was more than kind. He gained my confidence and tried to remove

my difficulties. He said: "Of course you cannot interpret the Bible; God never meant you to do so. There is a Church, whose minister I am, and she it is who is the guardian of Holy Writ. Did she not watch over it and guard it in the infancy of Christianity? She does so still. Christ, who loved the world sufficiently to die for it did not leave it without a guide." He spoke to me of the love of God, a Love finding its outcome in the Incarnation, and its climax in the real presence of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. All that he said to me seemed like a beautiful dream, harmonising with much Bible teaching, and supplying a want of my heart. I wished to believe what he taught, for I felt it gave a purpose to life, but my reason was not convinced. My heart dragged me one way, my head another.

Many influences united at this time to bend me towards a more orthodox position. Trouble had fallen upon me, death had laid his cold hands on those I loved, and, more than ever, I felt that the world beyond the grave was alone worth attaining, and realised that to find and tread the way to it was the sole purpose of our lives. I felt that without a definite

religion of one sort or another I could not live, and I dared not die.

At the end of the course of confirmation classes Archdeacon Evod asked me to be confirmed. "What is the use?" I said. "I don't know what to believe; there are times when I feel as if I believe in nothing." I expected him to be shocked, but he was not. He led me to the window. "Look before you! See the hills, the sky; surely you at all times believe in One who made these?" "Yes," I replied, gazing at the beautiful mountain ranges and the sunny cloudless sky. "Yes, I believe in the God who made all that." "Then you believe in a great deal," he said. "Indeed you have far more faith than you realise." He then spoke to me in a way that softened me, said that it was my pride which occasioned my disbelief, and begged me to cast that pride from my heart. The teaching of his Church could, he said, satisfy the hunger for truth and the desire for certitude. I was under the influence of one of those revulsions of feeling which led me to set down my own wickedness as the cause of all my doubts. I determined to root out pride and to believe as

a little child. All that night I prayed to God to lead me aright, to bless the sacrifice I was making of my reason, and to enable me to believe. I thought then that I was right in stifling my difficulties; I do not think so now. Truth is our highest good. Better a thousand times is honest doubt than smothered unbelief. To know that it is God, the infallible Truth, who speaks, and to accept that teaching even though you cannot understand it, is one thing. It is quite a different matter to cramp the mind by submitting to the illogical teaching of fallible men.

I was confirmed, and submitted to a long course of High Church instruction. My mother had built a church in our village, and this brought me into close contact with ecclesiastics, so that I realised forcibly the contradictory nature of their beliefs. For a time, however, I adhered to my resolution of stifling my doubts, and succeeded so far in doing so that I was able to play the organ in our little church, take part in Anglican services, and throw myself into "Church work." The earnestness and sincerity of the High Churchmen whom I met predisposed me to accept their teaching, but whenever

I allowed myself to think, the illogical nature of their teaching and the fact that it was opposed to the doctrines of the Church to which they belonged, rendered such acceptance an impossibility.

I was told to make the Prayer Book my guide, but the Anglican Prayer Book seemed even more contradictory and difficult of interpretation than did the Bible. When I complained that a second difficulty had been added to the first, I was told to accept the authority of the early Church and to believe the teaching of the Fathers. Here was a task.

To study hundreds of volumes, written in languages which I knew not, and myself to be their interpreter. Oh, for the faith of my childhood! It was then but one book, now it was hundreds. Besides, why should the Fathers be right; how find the exact date when error crept into the Church? Surely this was not the rule of faith for rich and poor, for learned and ignorant; and if salvation were "by scholarship," I would have none of it. If God were a good and loving Father He must have meant all men to know the truth, not only the learned. For hundreds of

years none but the priests could read, and books were scarce ; what was the rule of faith then ?

The Church of England herself states that "all Churches have erred in matter of faith, and for eight hundred years and more, laity and clergy, learned and unlearned, all ages, sects and degrees of men, women and children of the whole of Christendom, have been at once drowned in abominable idolatry, of all other vices most detested of God and most damnable to man." (Homily, Idol.)

Surely it was impossible to feel certain that during this fearful period the text of Scripture had not been perverted and truth effaced. The more I became involved in Church work the more I saw of contradiction in the teaching of the clergymen with whom I came into contact, and the more puzzled I became. I knew that every clergyman of the Church of England takes an oath to believe and teach the Thirty-Nine Articles in their "literal and grammatical sense, in the plain and full meaning thereof." Yet no two agreed on dogmas of the most vital importance. Mr. Gardiner had made me learn the Thirty-Nine Articles by heart, and I knew that they contained the

official teaching of the Anglican Church. Yet Ritualists tried to teach me the very doctrines therein condemned, doctrines against which Mr. Gardiner had especially warned me, and which I knew our Bishop held in horror. Still, partly because it was the influence of a High Churchman which had caused me to crush my doubts, partly because High Church doctrines responded better to my needs than Low Church ones, it was the teaching of this party that I tried to assimilate.

I tried, but in vain. High Churchmen spoke to me of a Church established by Christ and empowered by Him to teach all nations. Where was this Church? "Unhappily she had become divided, and her living voice was silenced." They spoke to me of a Church which Christ had promised should be the Pillar and Ground of Truth, but which had unfortunately fallen into error and had needed reforming by Henry VIII. and Cranmer: of a Church against which Christ had promised that the gates of hell should not prevail, but against which they unfortunately had prevailed: of a Church for which Christ in the hour of His Passion had prayed that she might be one even as He



and the Father were one, yet which had become divided.

All this they told me and asked me to believe that Christ was God. How could I help turning from such a creed; my intellect had long rejected it, and now both heart and head revolted. How could I worship a God who had failed? How honour a Christ whose promises had come to naught? This teaching did but emphasise Unitarian doctrines. So I determined that I would fall back on the idea that Christ was merely a great man, and would examine and judge for myself what had led to the theory of His divinity.

## CHAPTER III

### THE BIBLE AND BIBLE INTERPRETATION

I KNEW the subject was a vital one, and set myself to solve it as best I could. The first horror at the thought of denying the Divinity of Christ gradually gave place to the thought that it was clever to believe less than other people—that because of my unbelief, I was superior and more enlightened than my companions. Not that I ever thought all this time of doubting the teaching of the Bible; I merely prided myself on my superior interpretation of it.

Some parts of the Bible did seem to teach the Deity of Christ; others again appeared to indicate His inferiority to the Father. “My Father is greater than I.” “Why callest thou me good? There is none good but One, that is God.” “Then when Christ has put all things under His feet, He himself also shall be subject that God may be all in all.” These and many

other texts seemed to teach that Christ was not equal to God.

How to reconcile such passages as that in which he declares that the Day of Judgment was unknown to Him, with those which asserted that He and the Father were one, I knew not. I tried to take refuge in the quibble that the union between God and Christ was merely a spiritual one, that Christ was the Son of God, as indeed we all were sons of God, that, being the perfection of humanity, His will was in perfect unison with God's will; and that He was in that sense one with Him, but it did not satisfy me.

Month after month rolled by and each left me more anxious in mind than the one which preceded it. At times I wondered why the Bible was given to us to torment us, so difficult of interpretation did it seem. In it were Unitarian doctrines; in it, too, were doctrines Trinitarian. The Baptists appealed to the Bible against infant baptism; Anglicans drew their arguments in favour of it from the same source. Mormons quoted Scripture in defence of polygamy and of baptism for the dead. Quakers, Ranters, Shakers, each believed that they found

in the Bible warrant for the truth of their own particular tenets. Indeed, every extravagance of which the human mind is capable appealed to this authority for confirmation, and those who pretended to be its interpreters could not agree among themselves.

Truly the Bible seemed "a mirror in which each saw reflected his own views," and the more I looked the more did definite and explicit teaching elude my grasp. The doctrine of the Church to which I nominally belonged, that there were three Persons in one God, perplexed me sorely. I misunderstood it, and it was to me a mere contradiction unwarranted by Scripture and certainly nowhere explicitly stated. The distinct personality of the Holy Ghost I did not find: the Divinity of Christ I could not grasp. Moreover, if I did so interpret the Bible as to make it convey Trinitarian teaching, how did I know that my interpretation was right and that of the Unitarians wrong?

One night as I lay awake, the thoughts which had long been forming in my mind took shape. I asked myself, "What is this Bible? Whence does it come? How do you know that it is

God's Word? If the original books were inspired, are you quite sure that they have been correctly translated? Am I not a fool for making myself wretched by trying to understand a book which may after all not be true?" Doubtless I had imbibed these doubts from various sources, but never till that night did they take definite shape.

Colenso's teaching was in the air, and the "Psychological Climate of the Age" was probably responsible for this mental attitude. But be the reason what it may, as time went on the writings of Dr. Colenso and the other books I read, left me without belief in biblical inspiration. I found that different sects differed as to what books constituted the Bible, Catholics receiving books as inspired which Protestants rejected, and Protestants differing among themselves as to the canon of Scripture. I found that Luther rejected from the canon of Scriptures Job, Ecclesiastics, the Epistle of St. James, (which he called a mere epistle of straw), the Second Epistle of St. Peter, the Second and Third Epistles of St. John, the Epistle of St. Jude, and Revelations. Calvin rejected Esther, Tobias, Wisdom, Ecclesias-

ticus, Judith, and the two Books of Maccabees. Grotius asserted that the Canticle of Canticles, the Book of Wisdom, and the two last Epistles of St. John are not inspired. Strauss rejects the Gospel of St. Matthew, and Baring Gould calls the Song of Solomon the "maunderings of a worn-out voluptuary."

When I learnt all this, impressed by the differences of learned Protestant divines and of others who had studied the question, I lost my faith in the Bible. And this lack of faith was confirmed when I reflected that in no case had we the originals of the books; that only four manuscripts of an age as early as the fourth century were known to exist, and that these were in a more or less mutilated and imperfect state. I had never even heard the names of Baur, Reuss, or Welhausen; knew nothing of Tübingen or the modern school of Biblical Criticism, but it seemed to me impossible to know whether the original books of the Bible were inspired, impossible to be sure that they had not been tampered with and altered; moreover, even if they were inspired, and we possessed them in their original form, it seemed impossible to grasp their true meaning and

interpret them aright. The Arians and other heretics had, I was told, supported their false tenets by first tampering with the originals and then appealing to an adulterated text. But now I began to wonder whether after all the Arian Gospels were the false and those supported by the Christian Church true. I was not sure that the Bible was inspired, and even if I had been, I should have been no better off, for I should still have been in doubt as to which of the many contradictory interpretations was true.

As I have already said Colenso's teaching was in the air; it convinced me that I need not trouble my head over the apparent contradictions of a book whose inspiration was doubtful, and whose interpretation was impossible. Rathbone Greg tells us that "there is scarcely a low and dishonouring conception of God among men, scarcely a narrow and malignant passion of the human heart, scarcely a political error or misdeed which Bible texts are not adduced to countenance and justify." And if this be so, is it strange that an ignorant girl desired to abandon the task of its interpretation as hopeless? I say "desired," for religious questions

were still paramount and interested me to the exclusion of all others, and the manner in which I crazed myself with doubts would probably have resulted in illness had not much of my time been spent on horseback, and many a cobweb swept from my brains by a good gallop. I could not dismiss the subject from my thoughts, and no one can tell the feeling of utter desolation that came over me as one by one every prop which had hitherto sustained me crumbled beneath my feet.

Sometimes I believed that it was superior enlightenment that had led me to free-thinking conclusions; at others that it was my exceptional wickedness that made them possible: sometimes I cultivated my doubts, at others, smothered my unbelief. I knew not what to do. I was asked to base my faith on the Bible, but I could not believe "that God's highest behests would come to me through a letter unsigned, unsealed, copied over, re-copied—a letter transmitted through the hands of many servants."

Surely if God gave such a letter He would send it by a special messenger, possessing the key to its interpretation. This I now know



that He has done, but then I did not. I am not sure whether I then saw that as He had given me food, education, and life itself through my fellow-creatures, it was in harmony with the established order of nature that He should "teach me the truths of revelation not directly but mediately"; but I did feel that spiritual and intellectual truths should be taught by a living teacher, not by a dead letter; and as far as I knew no such teacher existed.

The High Church theory had revived and confirmed my doubts of the Deity of Christ; it had made clear to me that Christ had established a Church and made to it certain promises, and judging by the Churches around me, it seemed clear that those promises had not been kept, and that His work had been a failure. Still Archdeacon Evod's teaching had revealed to me an ideal never wholly obliterated and ultimately realised, and it prepared the way for much that followed. It seemed both to attract me to Christianity and to make Christianity for me impossible. At times I determined to shut my eyes and believe, at others, to open them and throw all restraints aside.

Months passed, and Renan's "Life of Jesus" fell into my hands. I read it spell-bound. Strauss's "Life of Christ" and Hanson's "Jesus of History" intensified the impression, and the works of Herbert Ainslie, Rathbone Greg, Matthew Arnold and others opened up a new world. My old religion had fled, and I strove to replace it with a belief in a "stream of tendency," resulting in "morality tinged with emotion," but I saw no grounds for emotion, and theoretically a cold adherence to duty was all that remained. The sunshine of life seemed gone, the purpose of life faded away, and at times I felt utterly desolate. I tried to persuade myself that though I was less happy than I had been in the past, I was also more enlightened and less narrow. I thought at that time that those who rejected Christianity were more tolerant than orthodox believers; since then I know them to be narrower and more bitter.

As time went on even the very foundations of duty seemed to rock beneath my feet. I had ever claimed the right of private judgment in matters of religion, but it now seemed to me that this privilege logically involved the

same right in matters of morals also. If there was no authority to say what was true, I saw not why I should accept any as to what was right. "The Pilgrim and the Shrine," by Edward Maitland, and his "Higher Law," were primarily responsible for this course of reasoning. But I did not pursue it; nay, I did not even finish reading "Higher Law." I had in many respects been very strictly brought up, and this caused me to shrink from following that path of argument to its conclusion. I seemed to be on the horns of a dilemma; either bound to believe in a religion which seemed to be illogical and unproved, or to regard right and wrong as vague words representing no definite realities. I threw logic to the winds, therefore, clung to such convictions as I possessed, and tried to shut my eyes to consequences.

I dared not question the law of right and wrong. I knew that there existed a law of Eternal Right—I knew that there was a God—that He was good, and that right must be right, come what may; these were the convictions to which I clung frantically when standing on the quicksands of unbelief. None but

those who have experienced it know, and none but they will understand, with what desperation I clung to these truths. I could at least hold fast to the belief in the goodness of God and trust in Him, though it seemed impossible for me to know why He had created me or what He wished me to do or believe.

## CHAPTER IV

### A QUONDAM CATHOLIC

ALL that I at this time knew of the Catholic faith was drawn from Protestant books. As represented in them it naturally repelled me. They taught me to look upon it as a bundle of superstitions, fit only for the ignorant, the embodiment of priestcraft, a faith which fettered the intellect of man. It may seem strange that the High Church teaching I had received had not obliterated these absurd ideas, but you must remember that in those days such teaching was very different from that of modern High Churchmen. I had never known any English Catholics, and somehow Catholicism seemed to be a religion fit only for foreigners and the illiterate. But one day I was reading a back number of *The Enquirer*, and was much struck by a speech made by an apostate Catholic (the Rev. Robert Suffield or Mr. Hargrove), to the effect that were he not an

advanced Unitarian, he would be a Roman Catholic ; that if God had made any direct revelation to man, in Catholicism alone could it be found. I cut out the speech and kept it.

That speech has influenced my whole life ; it was the first strong impression in favour of Catholicism, the first glimmer of light thrown on the teaching of the Catholic faith. I have it yet, and these are the words that struck me so forcibly :—

“I maintain that there is no choice between Unitarianism, or at least liberal religion, and Ultramontaniam. I know well that there are men at whose feet I am not worthy to sit who do take up a position between those two, and not only a few, but hundreds and thousands ; but I can only answer, I do not see how such a position is possible. They may see better than I, or may have retained prejudices of which I have got rid. I want to point out what I regard as the two chief features of the Romish Church, and just answering to them the two chief features of our communion.

“You have in the Romish Church, first, authority, carried to its highest extent, authority absolute and extending to all matters ;

secondly, you have supernaturalism developed to its utmost consequence. In regard to authority, you have it offered there as it had never been offered before, and I think the late step in decreeing the infallibility of the Pope has merely been the logical outcome of previous proceedings. I never could understand how the Church could be infallible, and its head liable to be mistaken, he being the Vicar of Christ. To me it has always appeared that this doctrine of infallibility, whether of Bible or Church, must ultimately culminate in the infallibility of one man, for so alone can it fully answer to the desire which really creates it. There is no doubt there is a craving in the human heart after authority. Mysteries surround us on every side—mysteries that only become the more mysterious the more we examine them. Make our belief as simple as we will in one great intelligence who is the life of all things, and yet you have difficulties that seem insuperable even to such a belief as that. Deny even this, and believe nothing, and you do not get rid of the difficulties. In the denial you find greater ones, but meeting such difficulties, what is the man tempted to do but to

look out somewhere for authority? We are living as men in the twilight, anxious to find our way, and to recognise objects around us; a most legitimate curiosity and interest about our own selves and our future leads us to strive to penetrate the darkness. How eagerly we listen when men tell us of some light they possess which can make all clear for us. It is indeed a promise, if it were only true, to be grasped at—light into eternity, into infinity; that is what an infallible Church offers to us. It is very easy to talk of blind confidence and trust in the Church leading men to give up their reason. All depends upon one question, whether the Church can do what it offers or not. If it really has this light, then the best thing that every man can do is to prostrate himself at the feet of the Pope and of the Church. Is it any humiliation for a man to bow before God? If Christ is God is it any humiliation to bow before His vicar on earth? Here, at least, is a grand Church that now can count back, to prevent disputes, let us say, fifteen hundred years; there is no Church as old as that—that extends itself throughout the whole world, that numbers men of every



language under heaven, which has had in all times saints and martyrs, and some of the wisest men in the world belonging to it. If there is an authority on earth over reason and conscience, surely it is that. It is a more reasonable thing to ask submission to this Church than to put in our hands a book, and say, you are to bow to the authority of this book, not saying who is the authority for the book or who is to explain the book to us. This is the first characteristic of the Church of Rome. How is it connected with Unitarianism? A man cannot pass from an authority such as that of Rome to the authority of those little Protestant Churches which may seem grand to England, but look very small from a world standpoint of view. I could not bow to the authority of the Church of England, even if it had any; but what has it? There was a time I earnestly sought to find it. Every minister is his own authority, and most contradictory doctrines are taught as those of the Church. But where do I find them, the communion that claims no authority; not only claims as a body no authority, but prescribes none to me? It is quite true you may say, the Baptists and

Wesleyans do not claim authority as a body; perhaps they do not, but they give you a book and insist upon that book being an authority. Where shall I find a body which shall leave me free, and to which I can pass from the Church of Rome without loss of dignity. Alone, so far as I find amongst you, I can lift up my head and say I have bowed to the grandest authority the earth ever possessed. I now bow to none but so far as my own reason and conscience approves it, and yet remain in your communion. It is this test that first has led me, or, to speak for my friend, us to Unitarianism. It is that the choice between Unitarianism and Romanism is the logical choice between the highest authority and entire freedom. Again, the Roman Church develops supernaturalism to the fullest extent. The foundation of the supernaturalism in the Church of Rome is the Incarnation; and I say this from my own experience, the Roman Church is the only Christian Church believing in the Incarnation which does at all realise the meaning of it. I hardly like now, so solemn is the subject, to enter upon all the consequences of it; but it often seems to me, when

I hear men fighting for the Nicene Creed and the divinity of Christ, how far they are from knowing what they mean. I have trembled, literally trembled, as I contemplated with faith that doctrine of the divinity of Christ. To say there was on earth eighteen hundred years ago a little baby in a manger cradle, growing up in the workshop, preaching and dying on the cross, who really was Almighty God, Maker of the world? If true, it is the only truth worth knowing at all. Every other fact in history is not worth teaching and knowing. If it is true, then the course of life to be prescribed is to act on that truth. There is nothing else worth living for,—God-man—God, dying on the cross for man. It is simply infinite in its signification, and who realises that truth? It is realised to some extent in the convents of the Church of Rome, in those places where men give up their whole life to one thought of serving the God-man, and it is realised in part by those who bow in humblest devotion before His mother. The worship of the Virgin Mary, let Protestants say what they will, is the logical outcome of the Incarnation. The mother of Jesus is the mother of God,

the greatest in all creation. What is the Archangel Michael, as the Prince of the angels of heaven, as compared to her who had nursed God in her arms and suckled Him at her breast? Such language sounds like mythology, and such it is, but it is the mere language of orthodoxy on the point. The worship of Mary and of St. Joseph, and of all things connected with them, of every relic supposed to have belonged to Him, all that merely comes as the cold reasonable sequence of the Incarnation. I cannot but feel, in stating this, how many pious men and learned there are who do believe in the Incarnation and abhor these consequences, and it may be that I am mistaken. Yet there is so much in the learned and pious of prejudice, it is quite enough to account for denials of this kind. The Church of Rome recognises the Incarnation as the foundation of the supernatural, and carries it into the whole life of man. It becomes to the profound Roman Catholic something more real than the natural. Take one doctrine—the centre doctrine of the Church of Rome—Transubstantiation. It has afforded abundant food for laughter and counter arguments of Protes-

tants, but I cannot see the difference between the doctrine that a little baby lying in its cradle is Almighty God, and saying that a wafer exalted amid a thousand lights and worshipped by thousands is Almighty God. The one thing is quite as rational or irrational, as possible or impossible, as the other. When I can believe the one, I will accept the other. Often have I felt, when orthodox Protestants have tried to prove to me the divinity of Jesus, that if they could have convinced me, I should have had no resource but to have returned to the Church whence I came. Looking on the Incarnation as the fount of all these doctrines of the Church of Rome and of the doctrine especially of hell—for hell corresponds to the Incarnation—the two dogmas will stand or fall together; to save men from infinite punishment, you have this infinite remedy of God-made man. If hell is put aside, why then did God come upon earth to die upon the cross? It becomes an infinite sacrifice, and we ask for what infinite benefit of salvation? If we have once realised this truth of the Incarnation and all that flows from it, and see this whole system of the Church of Rome

as the logical development of it, where shall we, who have rejected this doctrine, go? The orthodox Churches impose upon us the root-doctrine of the supernatural, and reject all that naturally springs from it. They say, 'Believe in doctrines such as the Incarnation and the existence of hell, but do not bow your knee before the Virgin Mother. Believe a baby is God, but do not believe that a wafer is changed.' In case I believe the one thing, I can as well the other. If I pass from the Church that believes all, it can only be to a Church that imposes none of it on me. From the Romish I pass to that body which has consistently denied the Incarnation and Transubstantiation alike. Looking upon the Church of Rome as the real home of the supernatural, and the really highest authority that does exist, if a man will come out from it and look to reason and conscience instead of external authority, there is no home for him to pass to if he would preserve religion, except amongst you. He may indeed throw aside religion altogether. It seems to me that in so doing he will sacrifice his highest instincts, but if he would retain them, would think that worship, however

misdirected, has been his highest life ; he must seek it then where not merely some of the developments of the supernatural are cut away, but the very roots of it are removed altogether. I am not implying that you absolutely deny the supernatural, because I know that there is a great difference of opinion amongst you on this point, and I am very glad there is, but the Incarnation you do deny, and you do give liberty to men to hold on other questions what view they will."

This speech I read and re-read.

Sometime after I read it, the Douay Bible fell into my hands, and I spent some weeks in comparing verse by verse the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. John with those of the Protestant version and reading the explanatory notes. In this and other ways I learned many things concerning the Catholic Faith, and began to perceive that it was far more logical than Protestantism. Was it not true, however, that Catholicism had enslaved men's intellect for ages? Were not here the most priest-ridden of people? Did not cruelty and tyranny reign unrestrained in her convents? How then could this be the true religion? The love of liberty

was a passion of my nature, and not for a moment did I believe that such a religion could be proved; even if it were, better thought I, to run the risk of hell than chain myself down to such a creed as this. Indeed, I looked upon it as the *reductio ad absurdum* of religion. Little did I then dream that the day would come when I should know it as the truth which makes men free.



## CHAPTER V

### PHILOSOPHIC DOUBT

TIME went on. The more I read the more bewildered I became. Each book contradicted the previous one. I had no standard by which to measure theories presented for my acceptance. I was very ignorant, though I did not know it; very wretched and lonely, with none in whom to confide my difficulties. Books were my chief companions, and my diary my only confidant. My mother was very strict over the novels we read, but as we grew older our more serious reading had been unchecked, and as our library was a fairly good one, and I was now grown up and could buy books for myself, I read what "religious literature" I liked. After a while I settled into a groove, none but works on philosophy attracted me, and the eternal question of the why, whence, whither of life became for me the only question of interest.

With that strange irony which makes people

call free-thought that which is of all least free, I termed myself a free-thinker, yet was the slave of every specious writer, driven hither and thither by every wave of opinion and every current of thought, with neither helm nor compass by which to guide my path. The more I studied, the more confusion became worse confounded; in complete mental solitude and great ignorance, I grappled with questions concerning the nature of God, until at times it seemed in very truth as if—

“He was only a cloud and smoke  
Who once was a pillar of fire,  
The guess of a worm in the dark,  
And a shadow of our desire.”

One philosopher after another became master of my thoughts. Not that I read systematically or thoroughly grasped their philosophies, but for years I read each in turn and swayed like a pendulum from one extreme to the other.

I was not clever enough to solve the problems presented to my mind, and while trying to unravel the relations of mind and matter became like a rudderless ship tossed hither and thither by every wind that blows. Sometimes it seemed as if the very idea of the infinite was im-

possible ; at others I realised that limitation of time and space were the true intellectual difficulty. To-day I argued that mind had produced matter ; to-morrow, that matter was the origin of mind. At one time the materialistic scepticism of Hume scared me, at another I plunged again into the new channel of thought which Locke had opened. To-day I felt, nay, in spite of all I had read to the contrary, I knew that matter was finite, and could not possibly be its own beginning and end ; to-morrow I fell back on pantheistic dreams, yet knew all the time that I was dreaming. After a time I reverted in sheer despair to materialism, yet dared not become a materialist.

Early in the morning I would climb some mountain-top where sea and plain lay stretched before me, and there would dream and wonder, and when evening came, still the fascinating problem enthralled me. Sometimes it seemed as if its extremes met, and both materialists and pantheists were one, for whether God is matter, or matter God, seemed to make little difference. If, as materialists tell us, the world is eternal, self-created, and self-existent, then it is God ; and if, as pantheists maintain, everything is God,

then it is evident that the world is God. Still, as Schopenhauer tells us, to call the world God is not to explain it, and the puzzle remained unsolved and imperatively demanded solution.

The idealism of Kant appealed to me far more than the teaching of the materialistic school; yet I found it hard to reject in theory the materialism to which Locke's teaching tends, for I did not then understand that the external world merely awakens and develops in us those faculties which the mind already contains; did not realise that though thought is conditioned by matter, yet it is not produced by it; and though nothing exists in the mind except the mind itself, this exception saves the whole situation from Locke's blank sheet of paper. Now I see clearly that not only does an identical percipient self exist independently of the external phenomena by which it is informed, but that it possesses in itself a faculty of recognising self-evident, necessary and universal truths and the essential realities of objective existence. This I did not then grasp; and, wishing to understand as well as to know, I crazed myself over difficulties. Many of these were theoretical rather than real, for certain truths,

which I could not have defined, were so ingrained in my mind that nothing I read enabled me to eject them, and when later I saw these truths defined by others and laid as stepping-stones, I trod fearlessly upon them.

I could never really believe myself to be the "shadow of a shade," nor deem those around me mere reflections, like those on whom Plato's chained prisoners gazed—never believe that this world which surrounds me consists of mere hollow phantoms without substance, "the pictured forms of my own imaginings."

I was always conscious of self identity. Nothing I read ever enabled me to rid myself of belief in my own personality; nor do I think it is possible to disbelieve this primary certitude, for in the words of St. Thomas "no man can assent to the thought that he is not, for in the fact of thinking he perceives that he is." Nothing I read really shook my belief in my own enduring self; indeed, I do not think my mind has ever been subtle enough (or stupid enough) to disbelieve its own existence. The more I read about states of consciousness, and the more I examined my own, the more I was convinced of the

existence of the enduring self which underlay them all.

My individual consciousness and my personal identity were manifest certainties which stared me in the face. I could not adjust the relations between the subjective world of the mind and the objective universe of things; but I at all times knew that both were real, and at all times realised that unity of self-consciousness which is the fundamental fact of life.

As time went on I saw more and more clearly, that both materialism and pantheism destroy the moral law, for if pantheism be true and all things are actually God, then Virtue and Vice are equally His action, and right and wrong but empty words. I saw that if matter be everything and everything be matter, then necessity is the supreme law and moral responsibility is a mere figment of man's invention. I could not believe, nor dared I accept a creed which proclaimed moral responsibility to be a myth.

I knew that the human will is free. I do not suppose that I really grasped the difficulties involved in the eternal antinomy of freedom and necessity, but I took it for granted

that I could not only do as I willed but could will as I choose. Nothing shook my belief in this fact—theory and experience might clash, but from the first I knew the issue of the strife, and the sense of personal identity, free-will, and moral responsibility were stronger than any proofs that could be brought to bear against them.

I read Dr. W. G. Ward's reply to Mill's Essay on Determinism, and have since, through his "Philosophy of Theism," learnt to discriminate between the impulse action of the will which is not free and the anti-impulse or deliberate action which is; but I do not think that on this subject "proofs" or reasoning have ever helped me much. In spite of Mill and Bain I knew I had the power of intervening as cause and changing the whole course of subsequent events, and though I could not have put my belief into words I believed in the existence of possibilities to which I might, yet need not, give actuality. It was in vain that various writers sought to persuade me that my free-will was a myth and my volition but an effect of antecedent causes and exterior events, of heredity and environment. Their

theories seemed inadequate to explain the consciousness I possessed of my own freedom ; and my conviction was so deep rooted that, had their arguments been ten times as strong as they were, they would have had no permanent effect. Neither arguments or proofs could make me more certain than I already was ; no reason could reason away the conviction I held.

I have said that I was swayed by every book I read, and it is true that I was as a cork driven hither and thither on the stream ; but I think it is also true that the waters on which I was driven had boundaries I could not pass, for there were, as I have said, certain thoughts and ideas that I could never assimilate. At times I repeated things I had read about matter being eternal or Blind Will being the origin of the Universe, but even in those days I could never seriously believe a blind or alogical will to be the origin of human reason or the source of the orderly development of the Universe. At times I advanced theories merely for the sake of hearing them refuted, for there was deep rooted in my mind something that rose up against many of my fundamental doubts



and difficulties. From first to last there existed the subconscious conviction that there was One to Whom I was responsible. Whether this impression was the result of untutored instinct or the outcome of early education, I could not decide, but it was ineffaceable. Even when I could not formulate proofs of the existence of the external world, or of its creator, I knew the Universe to be an objective reality and believed many truths that are involved in the fact of its existence.

Do not misunderstand me. I am not here attributing apodeictic force to these thoughts, but merely stating that I thus thought and believed.

I believed in my own existence and in a world which was not within my own mind, because I found it utterly impossible to disbelieve in them; and if I believed in my free-will because I could not ignore its possession, I believed also in God because I could not rid myself of that belief.

Not only my reason but my moral nature necessitated His existence, and at times I felt like Goethe, that even if all was necessity, then a necessity for God found place among other

necessities. From the first my conception of moral law included the idea of a Personal God, and I realised that without God there was no soul and no future life ; right and wrong were simply words, and existence either a curse or a farce. This I could not believe.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE LIMITS OF REASON

SOMETIMES I determined that I would put on one side the questions that tormented me, but I could not. I was always fond of solitude, and directly I was alone they recurred to my mind. Many a night I sat for hours gazing at the "pitiless, passionless eyes" that shine so brightly in those distant realms, and wondering whether those who dwelt there knew the things I wished to know; many a time I begged God to send a flash of lightning or a sign, and waited half thinking it might come, but it came not.

Schopenhauer says, "Our nature is a perpetual striving, and may be compared in every respect with an insatiable thirst"; and it did, indeed, seem at this time as if an insatiable thirst for knowledge of the unseen tormented me. Later I knew that Schopenhauer's words contain a deep truth, a truth embodied in the

words of St. Augustine, "For Thyself Thou hast created us, O God, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee." But not yet was I to drink of the Inexhaustible Fountain of which he who drinketh can never thirst again. During the years that followed I read proofs and disproofs of the existence of God; though I could not answer those who argued that the nature of the Supreme Being was unknown and unknowable, and that even our own existence was questionable—though to-day I was to some extent influenced by materialists and to-morrow by idealists, yet deep down there was a conviction that there was a God, and that I was accountable to Him.

I determined, therefore, to study closely the physical, metaphysical, and moral proofs of the existence of God; to leave no stone unturned until I had ascertained the basis of that belief or cast it from my mind. Whether God exists, whether the Infinite is knowable, whether the material world has been created—all these questions concerning which I had read much haunted me; and though in my heart of hearts I felt the answer, yet I could not rest till I had tried to grasp the proofs by which that

answer might be justified. A strange taste, perhaps, for one so young; still no other subject interested me, and on through the mire of doubt and over the quicksands of unbelief I wended my painful way, often resolving I would not open any philosophical books or think at all, and just as often re-opening them, and becoming absorbed in the problems they contained.

I realised that as I was myself the determining power of my actions, and therefore their cause, so I myself must have had a cause. But there I stopped. What, or Who, was that source of being which I longed to know? What that Cause, itself necessarily uncaused, whence all proceeded? My personality, my spirit, my will, my sense of obligation were, I was told, steps by which I might climb and get a dim vision of God. It was pointed out to me that the outward physical order and the inward moral law both testified to the existence of One who was the First Cause. I realised that an uncaused Being must be absolutely simple, indivisible, and eternal; and my heart told me that He must be a Person holding moral relations with man. Still it was neces-

sary that I should see clearly one step at a time. To me the inward proof was by far the more convincing. I think it was the moral, rather than the sensitive and intellectual, faculties of my being which led me step by step to the explicit belief in the existence of a Personal God, though to this end they all converged.

And so I read on, swaying backwards and forwards, for the most part, at the mercy of every writer whose books I read, yet here and there finding stepping-stones on which I securely trod. All this time Kant had helped me greatly, and dispelled many of the mists which Hume had raised. He it was who made theoretically clear to me that the Ego is not only directly and immediately known, but the necessary pre-supposition of all knowledge; for though the matter of our knowledge comes from without, the form comes from within, and the unity of self is the most fundamental form or category of all. But Kant's influence has been twofold. Before I came under it I had never doubted the infallibility of human reason, and in my younger days not only felt sure that truth existed, but also that I was quite capable of

finding it. It was therefore a great shock to me when first Kant taught me that speculative reason is utterly powerless to deal with the problems of the infinite. I was not familiar with his "Critique of Pure Reason," though many of the arguments it contains had become known to me through the writings of others; but I do not think that his doctrine of nescience would in any case have come home to me. I had a German master who talked much of this book, and I knew that in it Kant taught that human cognition being confined within the circle of phenomena, the *ding-an-sich* is for ever unknowable, and that therefore questions concerning God, the soul and immortality, are beyond reason's ken. But all that Kant leaves open in his "Critique of Pure Reason" is filled up in the "Critique of Practical Reason," and it was the arguments in this latter, rather than those of the former work, which I assimilated. In the land in which I lived nature is beautiful and speaks of God, and to use the philosopher's own words, "the starry heavens above and the moral law within, filled my soul with ever rising awe and admiration," and rendered me deaf to his destructive criticism. It was in vain

that Kant taught me that man can know nothing of the eternal substance of things, and that he sees but appearances, strung together "on the thread of cause in the frame of time and space," but not in vain did he show that the Practical Reason can know God.

At times in my dreaming hours I tried to assimilate his destructive criticism, but in the light of the noonday sun it vanished, and even when I dreamed I knew such theories were but dreams; deep down in my mind was a firm conviction that Reason is the basis on which knowledge must ultimately repose; though we can know but little we can know that little with certitude. Man's moral rather than his intellectual nature may be the page on which is most clearly written the message of God, but Reason it is which reads the pages and translates it into human language. Mr. Balfour would fain rob us of the grounds on which certitude rests, but then, as now, it was clear to me that, though it is impossible that our finite minds should know things in their full relation to God and the universe, we can still know with certainty that which falls within the sphere of the understanding.



Then, as now, I realised that the height of knowledge is not, with Socrates, to declare that nothing can be known, but to define the sphere of human reason and to realise that though by divine right it reigns supreme in that domain, still its kingdom is limited and its office vice-regal. There were times when I failed to realise these truths, but at no time in my life was permanent agnosticism possible to me. Whenever I tried to be an agnostic I fell theoretically either into materialism or into subjective idealism: into the denial of anything above or beyond matter, and consequently of all that was most real to me, or else into the denial of objective reality, consequently of the objective validity of my ideas.

Since then I have learned to see clearly that we can securely build our faith on those self-evident truths which are independent of all proof and are the very foundation on which all reasoning depends, the very proposition that we can know nothing contains its own refutation, and, in making it, not only does a man stultify himself by denying the very principle on which he is about to build his system, but is actually laying the foundation of all truth and of all

knowledge. "He assumes the existence of man, since he declares of him that he can know nothing; he assumes the veracity of reason, by asserting the power of knowing the truth of the fact which he enunciates; and he emphatically asserts the principle of contradiction, since he says that something and nothing are not the same thing."

This I only fully appreciated at a later date, but even at the time of which I am writing the doctrine of nescience took no permanent hold on my mind. I have said that I cared intensely to solve the problems of existence, but whether this desire arose from a craving for religion or from a thirst for knowledge I know not. Be the reason what it may, I was *tourmentée des choses divines*, and, though I had all that this world can give to make life happy, still I suffered acutely because I could not solve the mystery surrounding human life. The more I thought and read, the more clear and explicit became my conviction of the existence of God, a conviction I had never really lost even when I accepted certain theories which logically would have compelled me to forego that belief.

## CHAPTER VII

### DEEPENING CONVICTIONS

MONTHS passed and still I read on. In the early morning I would start off with my book to a spot where an oak tree cast its shade, and ponder on the fascinating problem of existence. Little by little I grasped clearly the idea of mind as a determining power, and with it grasped a definite conception of cause. More and more explicitly I learnt to recognise myself as an independent existence, possessing an intellectual nature of which my senses were the handmaids, informing it of things other than itself. More and more clearly I learnt to realise explicitly the certainty of the moral law and the freedom of the human will; and after a time I perceived clearly that from those universal truths, from that supersensible source of knowledge, might be derived the theoretical knowledge of my moral relations to God. Kant did not teach me these things, but he

taught me to realise the convictions that I held. Even his destructive criticism had its use, for from it I gained my first clear idea of the insufficiency of human understanding to deal with the problems of the Infinite; my first clear conviction that if we were to know aught concerning God and His Will it was necessary that He should reveal Himself to us. Thence came my first definite idea of the necessity of revelation, an idea which later on bore the logical fruit of Catholicism. Belief in the reality of the sphere of reason was engrained in me; from Kant I learnt the limits of that sphere; and from the conflict of these positions I learnt the part that Reason has to play in religion. Later I learnt to realise clearly that it is folly to turn from the light that we possess because it is not the noonday sun; folly to say that we cannot see a thing at all because its details are obscure; rank folly to deny the power of reason because its sphere is circumscribed. The process by which Kant vindicates, in the sphere of ethical consciousness, those central ideas of God, freedom, and immortality, the certainty of which he denied to speculative reason, was in some respects too

deep for me ; yet the fact that he did reconcile the two lines of argument in his Critiques helped me in that it left me free to hold intellectually that which my moral nature told me to be true. I think Kant's teaching paved the way for the reception of a religion in which the sphere of reason is strictly limited to its own domain, yet in that domain is recognised as supreme—I mean the religion of the Catholic Church. Moreover, though Kant translated the dogmas of the Christian Faith into terms of moral rationalism, I think the way in which he writes of Christ as the personification of the moral ideal, and of the Church as a society to help towards the attainment of that ideal, was not without its fruit in after years.

Little by little I realised what a cheap quality negation is, and sought rather to prove those truths which conscience told me were true, than to plume myself on intellectual superiority by their denial. The more I read, the clearer became my belief in God, conscience, free-will and immortality. I could not then have classified the arguments which led to this conviction as ontological, cosmological,

teleological and moral-sense arguments, nor can I even now say definitely whether I was most impressed by the arguments derived from my mental concept of God, by those derived from dependent and contingent existence, by the argument from design, or by that drawn from the moral sense. I think the latter appealed most to me, though I ignored many of its aspects which Sir William Hamilton and others have since made clear; but I think also that mere arguments played but a secondary part in evolving these convictions, though they had an important share in making them explicit and in teaching me to realise that I possessed them. I have said that the moral-sense arguments swayed me most, because though at times arguments such as that derived from Dr. Ward's philosophical mice and Paley's watch influenced me, at others they lost their force, whereas arguments from the moral sense never seemed to lose their effect on me. Certain, however, is it that the union and the concurrent force of these various arguments produced on my mind a certitude of which I was never afterwards able to divest myself.

More and more clearly I grasped the idea

that contingent being must have a cause. The only cause of which I had consciousness was my will, and therefore the only cause I could imagine for creation was a will like my own, only infinitely more powerful and perfect—not the blind irrational will of Schopenhauer, but a will intelligent and free. I possessed reason, will, and moral and spiritual affections, and, as nothing can exist in the effect which was not first in some way in the cause, and none can give what he does not at least virtually possess, so I saw that the source of my being, and the being of all created things, must contain in Himself every perfection with which I and they are endowed. If there is a primordial Being it must be an “ens a se,” depending on none, and limited by nothing. It must “contain the reason of its existence in its own intrinsic absolute necessity.” It necessarily exists from eternity by its own power, and if eternal, then it must be infinite; further, totality of being involves infinite perfection, because, if capable of increased perfection, this Being could not be infinite and therefore not eternal. Moreover, it was pointed out to me that the conception in us of a perfect

Being realising our highest ideals is a proof of God's existence, for as water cannot rise beyond its own source, so our finite minds could not conceive of the existence of an Infinitely Perfect Being did no such Being exist.

I have since been taught by Catholic writers that St. Anselm's ontological argument jumps from the ideal order to the real, and will not bear the strain put upon it. Be this as it may, I was at the time much influenced by it.

The proofs taken from existing things of which God is the cause, and from ideal things of which He is the principle, gradually sank into my mind. I do not mean that I could at that time have classified my arguments, still less do I claim any originality of thought or expression, but looking back I see the process by which I assimilated the thoughts of others and developed certain ideas latent in my own mind. From the first I was unable so to dim my mental vision as to entirely lose sight of the Cause and Sustainer of the universe, nor was I silly enough to think that mere fortuity or mechanical necessity can account for the world in which we live.

When I thought of man, still more did I



realise that the perfections of all being must necessarily be contained in his First Cause, and that He who dowered man with personality must Himself be a Person. In human nature rather than in the material world I saw the footprints of God. Out of the idea of self, with its wondrous self-consciousness and power of will, came the idea of a personal God, self-conscious and omnipotent, by whom I was created ; not an Infinite Force in a state of impersonality, but an Infinite Spirit in a state of personality, a Supreme Person by whom man was created. Nor could I conceive it possible that this Supreme Intelligence had created man without an adequate field for his energies, and an adequate satisfaction for his desires.

## CHAPTER VIII

### GOD AND IMMORTALITY

DISBELIEF in my own immortality seemed to me incompatible with my belief in the existence of God ; indeed, I think I believed in the survival of the human soul after death before I believed explicitly in the existence of a personal God. I find it very difficult to disentangle the different stages through which I passed ; but though in my diary I find assertion and contradiction side by side, and know that, like a pendulum, my mind swayed hither and thither, yet I know, too, that it swayed in a certain groove and never passed certain limits. I know that I never really disbelieved in the existence of a future life, though at times my belief was hazy and uncertain. I do not mean that I looked on immortality altogether in the same light as I do now, but vaguely as a future sphere of action where the pent-up power of humanity should have full scope, and my unsatisfied desires find their realisation.

Sometimes I tried to think what it would mean to cease to exist, but could not. I was told that matter is indestructible, and that all the science of all the scientists cannot destroy one single atom; and I could not see why I should perish.

Science told me that in the great laboratory of nature there could be no waste, and it seemed to me supremely inconsistent to say that the matter of which man's body is composed shall exist for ever, but the personality which is the web and woof of his identity shall cease to exist. This I could not believe. My body seemed to me but a machine which served to express my thoughts and actions. There were times when I felt trammelled rather than helped by it, times when it seemed but a cage that cramped my action, and when I beat my soul against its bars.

Starting as I did from the fact of my own identity, the conception of a vague existence in which personality ceases did not satisfy me. The pantheistic dreams which flitted across my brain, of a future state in which self-consciousness was absorbed in the universal consciousness, were but empty shadows which took no

real hold on my mind. If in my future I was not to retain my own identity and self-consciousness, then it was no immortality for me. I wanted an immortality in which I would be myself and in which I could satisfy all the cravings of my heart for happiness and all the desires of my mind for knowledge. The more I had the more I wanted, and the unattainable was ever the object of my desires. I longed to know the ultimate realities of things; I talked of matter and substance, but I was told they were unknowable, and that the empty shell of appearances was the sole object of human knowledge.

I have sat at night on the balcony and seen in the clear southern air those "distant skies, with thousand eyes," of which Plato unplatonically writes. I have longed to visit and explore the myriad worlds of which science tells us, and to know the why, whence, whither of their existence—in vain. "Time and space stood like dragons at the gate of my desire," and forbade me enter or to understand.

I longed for knowledge; yet the more I learnt, the more I realised the depths of my ignorance. With a far deeper yearning I longed

for perfect happiness, but whenever I thought I had grasped it, it died, as dies the day in that southern clime where twilight is unknown. With all the fierce intensity of an undisciplined nature I longed for undying love, while "death and inconstancy warned me that on earth it was not attainable." Seeing on every side disappointment and failure, my heart cried desperately that this was not the end. I saw clearly that without immortality my life on earth was but a vain strife for the unattainable, and my longing for knowledge and happiness but as the thirst of Tantalus. I knew that this was not so. The few fleeting years of life were all too short to provide an adequate field for the realisation of my desires. My nature imperiously demanded a wider field of effort, and I have turned sick at heart because I could not stay the fleeting joys of life. I have realised that I could not solve the tiniest of the mysteries that surround us, but I have never been able to rest in the conviction that for me they were for ever insoluble.

Even Mill had taught me that there was an inherent probability that the world was ruled by a Sovereign Intellect, and if this was so, it

seemed impossible that mankind should have powers and faculties destined to be useless, and longings to remain for ever unsatisfied. I saw clearly that "without an eternal future, man was but a creature of unsatisfied desires, of will power that lacked an adequate field of exercise, and of love without an equivalent." I saw this, and I realised that, if he lacked this future his highest aspirations were meaningless, and he himself was a failure unworthy of the conception of a Sovereign Intellect.

Something within me told me that this was not so; the moral, the spiritual, and the intellectual powers of my mind cried out and asserted the immortality of the soul. I felt that if there be no future life, then not only are our highest hopes, our most intense desires, our loftiest ideals but vain illusions, but life is a ghastly failure not worth living. I did not, could not, believe that personality would cease to exist. I could not rid myself of belief in my own immortality. Since then I have been taught to realise more explicitly that the very potentialities of my nature are a guarantee that there exists a future sphere of action and an adequate field of effort, but I do not think

that I then believed less firmly than I do now. Then perhaps it was the heart rather than the head that spoke, and now both heart and brain proclaim the truth of the immortality of man.

Even then I realised that the justice of God and the moral nature of man demand another world in which equity shall have her dues, in which the sins of this world shall be punished and virtue have its reward. I not only believed in a future life, but every power of my mind and every desire of my heart demanded that such a life should exist.

There may be some who do not see in nature the wonders of the great Artist's hand, who do not hear in the rhythm of the universe the echoes of the Voice Divine; some to whom the beauty of things temporal does not reveal the existence of things eternal; these may disbelieve in the existence of the soul because they cannot touch it with the dissecting knife, and of the future life because they cannot find it in the crucible—I could not. To me the intangible has ever been the most real, and it is so still. The fleeting beauty of the early dawn, the purple radiance on the

mountain-tops, the passing glory of the setting sun, all murmured in my ear promises of joy that will not fade. The undying memories of the past, the transient nature of the present, the eager hope of the future, all sang of life eternal.

During the years of which I have been writing I lived a solitary life, and mixed but little with the world, but after a time I came more in contact with others. Since taking lessons from Archdeacon Evod I had had a strong desire to acquire the Continental pronunciation of Latin; now I determined to learn. On making inquiries for some one to teach me, I was told that the Roman Catholics pronounced in that way, and that the Dominican nuns, who had a school in the town, would doubtless give me lessons. I answered that I should not dream of going to such people. At last, however, my desire to learn the correct pronunciation of Latin, my curiosity to see what a nunnery was like, and a certain love of adventure overcame my dread, and I drove to the convent. Before entering I placed a note in the cabman's hands, saying, "Wait a quarter of an hour; if I do not return,



ring; and then if within five minutes I do not make my appearance, drive quickly to my brother and give him this." The note ran as follows: "I am in the Dominican convent, and can't get out. Come and help me." How often since then have I laughed with the nuns over that note, as indeed I did that very day. Finding them charming, gentle, and refined, I was soon at my ease, and when the ring came ventured to tell them what I had done. Why I should have thought that English gentlewomen who devoted themselves to the service of God and the poor became dishonourable in consequence, or what good I could have conceived they would have derived from my detention I cannot tell; I suppose popular delusions acting on engrained prejudice had overcome whatever common sense I possessed.

The Mother Prioress said that their time was so taken up with their duties, that they had no leisure for private lessons, and therefore refused my request. On my asking to be allowed to come again, she said that a nun was soon to take the veil, and that I might come to the ceremony. I went, wondering what my friends would say if they knew.

I cannot exactly say how that visit influenced me. I think I felt, as I felt later, that a Catholic Church was quite different from any other Church I had entered, and that a feeling of rest and consolation came over me as I knelt there. Intellectually my visit had no results, but I often thought of the gentle nuns and wonder why they, who were, as I thought, ignorantly superstitious, seemed better than those who were more enlightened. The months went by, and I read on, talking much of freedom of thought and of liberty, yet the slave of every author whose books I read, a feather tossed hither and thither by every wind that blew, yet ever resting on solid ground when the wind had passed away.

## CHAPTER IX

### MATERIALISM AND EVOLUTION

IT was a materialistic age, and scientists, flushed with success, were loudly asserting their supremacy and heaping contempt on all who opposed them. I came into no personal contact with scientists, yet the intellectual atmosphere was permeated with their spirit, and at times I did not escape its influence. Still, even in the days when I was most swayed by the materialistic view of life, I was like one of those atheists of whom Frances Cobbe says that they are like children playing at the mouth of a cavern of unknown depth—"they run in and out, and explore it a little way, but always within sight of the daylight outside where dwell their parents and their friends calling on them to return." Never, certainly, did I stay long in that cave, the horrors of which will never be fully revealed till, for those who dwell therein, "the after-glow of Christianity has

faded, and the glimmer of natural religion has ceased to shed its light"; when for them the way back from that dark cave is lost, then in the black night that prevails will be seen the lurid features of covetousness, anarchy, and passion, those evil monsters who will there hold sway. As for me, I have oftentimes wandered in those regions in which mankind, "orphaned through loss of the Infinite Father," tries to satisfy the hunger of the mind by feeding on false philosophies, and to stay the aching void within the heart by worshipping the transient things of time. But it has ever been in vain; the hunger of the soul cannot be satisfied with earthly food. Whenever I have tried to satisfy the infinite craving of heart and mind with the finite joys of life, I have found them but as Dead Sea fruit, incapable of satisfying my heart's desire.

Time passed. Evolution was the talk of the day, and non-human and ape-like progenitors were the fashion. Darwin's books gave new direction to my thoughts, and the *Zeit-geist* caused me for awhile to seek the solution of the questions which agitated me rather in the discoveries of science than in psychology.

By a strange reaction of mind the philosophical reading of years seemed at times to pass from my mind, and I viewed the Darwinian theory from my old ultra-Protestant standpoint rather than from any stage of thought which I had since reached. I seemed to measure my idea of material creation by that of an "infinite mechanic," a Deity who created it in the past, rather than a Power who is immanent in creation. I say the Darwinian theory, though I know that the theory is older than the days of either Darwin or Mr. Spencer. St. Augustine was familiar with the theory of evolution, and used it in explaining the Mosaic account of Creation. Heraclitus of Ephesus was a pronounced evolutionist, and two thousand years ago Shakyamuni Buddha taught that a pre-existing spontaneous tendency to variation is the cause of the origin of species. In reading Darwin's books I seemed at times to think of the universe as what Carlyle calls, "a huge, dead, immeasurable steam-engine, rolling on in its dead indifference," a something which God had created and wound up and left alone. Yet I realised God as the Creator of the world with greater clearness than heretofore, though I seemed to

see Him at a distance and to lose the sense of the world's present dependence on Him, and of the moral relations He holds with man. I do not think this was altogether the result of the books I read, but was to some extent due to my return to active life, which seemed to make those years I had spent in dreaming a thing apart. The results of this were twofold. It made my belief in God seem more definite, and yet it seemed to separate me further from Him. In turning a deaf ear to pantheism, I failed to realise that God is not a God who made the universe and then left it, but one in whom it "lives and moves and has its being." He is the Eternal Present, not the future or the past, and therefore in relation to Him there is no succession of events. "As in the circle the centre co-exists with all the points of the circumference, so the Divine energy co-exists with every moment of time." God did not create in time; He created eternally, though the effect was produced in time. He did not become a Cause, but was a Cause from all eternity. "Being the fulness of infinite activity, He is related as Cause to the effects He produces, not by reason of any change He suffers, but

because the effects exist in virtue of His infinite causality." God is the great I AM, and this is the truth which Darwinism at first obscured in my mind. I was at times carried along by his teaching to the extent of thinking of God as if He had merely created an original matter-germ and left it to develop all the myriad forms of non-sentient and intelligent life, but never to the extent of thinking that He did not exist.

Darwin's books helped me, yet I cannot quite explain why they did so. Somehow they seemed to bring me back from the ideal to the real, from the abstract to the concrete, and to give me a more tangible hold of my belief in the existence of God. The circumstances which brought me into contact with Darwinian lines of thought also brought me into closer contact with my fellow-creatures. I read and dreamed less, and drank in more of the spirit of an age which was essentially practical, and I was less able to have even imaginary doubts of the objective reality of the world, of truth, and of God. Materialism, spiritualism, and monism, the only logically possible theories of the world of being, had

passed before my mental vision, and neither materialism nor monism had contained for me the solution of the problem of life. When therefore I was taught that the world around me was produced by the evolution of matter, this in no way upset me or caused me to revert to monist theories, but rather revealed to me the wisdom of a God who could endow with such wondrous possibilities the matter He had created, and impose on it laws destined in the course of ages to produce the results we see. Darwin told me that each creature possessed sufficient instinct to accomplish its destiny and produce the highest results of which, under given environments, its organism was capable, but he did not tell me who implanted the law by which such evolution took place. I was too ignorant of science to weigh the details by which he proved his principles. I was carried away by his conclusions, yet I saw that evolution implies the existence of intelligence, and that some one must have started matter on its journey through time and have determined what its course was to be. I realised that even if the whole cosmic drama were evolved from primitive atoms, those atoms



needed a Creator whose intelligence had endowed them with potentiality of development and guided the course of their evolution. Pantheistic theories had lost their hold over me, and I wanted to know who gave to the atoms the power to concert in order to attain an end not yet realised, and the laws that governed the attainment of that end; who gave them their purpose and caused that combined activity of physical causes of which order was the product. More easily could I imagine the type in a printer's room concerting to produce the poems of Dante, than "primordial atoms initiating the work of the world's creation," and when I read of atoms and of force which caused their evolution, I wanted to know who made the atoms and who originated the force which caused them to evolve.

Science, far from resolving the difficulty, does but increase it, and reveals endless problems which she cannot solve. Sir John Lubbock tells us that at least seventy million solar systems exist, and that many more are extinct, and scientists agree "that the wave of life which is now passing over our earth is but a ripple on the sea of life within the solar system, and that

this sea of life is but a wavelet on the great ocean of life that co-exists with the universe." I was told that the tiny stream and the mighty ocean, the far-off planet and the acorns falling to the ground, were governed by the same laws and guided by the same power. When I learnt such facts as this—when I thought of the vast realms of space and of the past myriads of centuries, and realised the unity of the reign of law and the universality of its action, I felt that one great intelligence must have planned it all. The more I saw of the wonderful ways of nature, the more Darwin told me of the adaptation of means to ends, the more explicitly I realised the need of an intelligent Creator to account for the world in which we live and for man who lives in it. The more I thought, the more clearly I grasped the fact that a hundred secondary causes do not make the initial cause less great, and the more convinced I became that cosmic evolution, if true, does but reveal the grandeur and strength of the plan of creation and the wisdom of Him who planned it. When Darwin pointed out the laws of evolution and selection, and displayed on every side "force with direction working

out a plan," he seemed to give new meaning to much that I had read of the argument from design, and to show the universe as the outcome of Intelligence. Evolution gave me a wider conception of God's creative power, and the more I read the more explicitly I realised creation as a revelation of the power and wisdom of God, and the mind of man who was able to read the page outspread before him, as a revelation still more wonderful and complete. Man was the page on which I saw writ large the name of his Author, and the mind of the man the mirror in which I saw most clearly reflected the nature of God.

## CHAPTER X

### SCIENCE AND GOD

I HAVE said that, on the whole, Darwinism helped me. It did not reach me until after the first shock of its novelty had passed away, not until many religious teachers had readjusted the focus of their mental vision, otherwise its effects might have been different. In trying to state my views on this subject, I am conscious that I am writing in the light of later days, still, even at that time, I knew that behind evolution there must be mind and will, purpose and intention; that selection necessitated a selector, and law a legislator. I had long been taught that "the How" does not explain "the Why," and when Darwin pointed out to me the wondrous laws that govern creation and the marvellous adaptation of means to ends that surrounds us on every side, he seemed to reveal the wisdom of the author of the universe. It seemed clear that

if the universe is on the lines of a progressive evolution, from bare matter up to thought itself, then its course must have been initiated by intelligence and volition. In the material world the end not realised has no place, and yet the very idea of Evolution is based on its acceptance, for all human progress involves the idea of an Absolute End.

Even then the solution offered by materialists seemed to me like that given in the Indian fable of the world and the tortoise—the difficulty was referred back and back, but not lessened thereby. The more I read concerning creation, the more I saw displayed the wisdom of the Creator, and the more I realised that the problem of the world admitted of but one solution. That solution is the power of an eternal and omnipotent God, the infinite source of those powers which we call thought, intelligence, and love.

Of course none of the conclusions I drew from Darwin's writings were due to any originality on my part. I read everything on which I could lay my hands. I talked with others about his books and I assimilated certain ideas, that is all. Many of my teachers thought

Darwin's theory of evolution derogatory to humanity, but I cannot see that if the theory of the evolution of the body of man from the lowest forms of organic life be true it would in any way detract from the dignity of the human soul.

I think Darwin's books helped me in more ways than I can explain. I was ignorant of physical science. I read his books just as other ignorant people read them, yet the very fact of fixing my attention on the problems raised by them seemed not only to give me a clearer and more definite view of the wonders of creation, but at the same time to make me realise that science has no answer to the questions that perplexed me. The *How* is dealt with, but the *Why* is left unexplained.

In those days many claimed that the realm over which science held sway was unlimited, but to-day scientists are the first to acknowledge its limitations and with clearer eyes to see behind Nature, Nature's God. Professor Huxley tells us that "science is as clear as the Bible about an Eternal of Whose infinite process of evolution the visible universe is a fragment;" Lord Kelvin that "overpowering

proofs of intelligence and benevolent design lie around us, showing us through Nature the influence of a free will and teaching us that all living beings depend upon one everlasting Creator and Ruler;" and Sir William Siemens that "all knowledge must lead up to one great result, an intelligent recognition of the Creator through His works." But in the days of which I write it seemed that scientists ignored God, and, as men dazed by sudden light see clearly neither the sun nor the objects that surround them, so dazed by the new found wisdom displayed in creation, they appeared to lose sight not only of the existence of God but of the dignity of man. Nor is it strange that those who dim their vision of God should lose their conception of the greatness of man, for man without God is but as the worm that dies. Ignorant as I was of physical science, I had only been interested in Darwin's books because I hoped that they would throw light on the problems that perplexed me; they did so by showing me intelligence at work in creation and by making my conception of God definite and concrete. Realising that no impersonal force can be intelligent, I saw more

and more clearly that the universe owes its origin to an intelligent Personality, the Creator and Ruler of the world.

During the years in which I dabbled in philosophy I had never been able to find rest in any of the philosophical systems by which I had been entangled. Each had in turn promised to be a stepping-stone to truth. Each had seemed a means of obtaining it, or of proving it unattainable, but in none could I rest; none did I believe to possess the truth. Each seemed to help me in some way; none enabled me to grasp that satisfaction for which my heart craved, or to attain to that religious certitude my nature imperatively demanded.

Yet as each system failed, my desire for truth grew keener, and as my belief in God grew more explicit, my desire to know His nature and His will became stronger. Taking my books and lunch, I spent long days on the mountains, alone with Nature. On the hot summer evenings I would sit on the balcony and gaze on the "planet powdered floor of heaven," and then I would turn to God, and cry aloud to Him to make Himself known. "Surely, O God, there is some ladder by



which we may climb to Thee, some medium through which we may see Thee; make Thou Thyself known to me." I listened for an answer, but the murmuring of the wind, or the plaintive notes of the curlew were all I heard. Perhaps conscience whispered soft and low, that humility and prayer were the only reasonable ways of approaching God.

Had I been born in recent years I might, when passing through these mental difficulties, have thought of putting an end to life, but in those days young people, under whatever theoretical difficulties, were not tired of life; and though I sometimes felt miserable and crazed with doubts, I yet would have shrunk with horror from the thought of death. Moreover, at the bottom of my heart I believed in a future life, and in a God who would reward virtue and punish sin, and dared not have put an end to life even had I wished to do so.

## CHAPTER XI

HERBERT SPENCER

THERE now occurred a period of which I have but little to say, for my mental activity was in abeyance—circumstances tended to change the current of my life, and left me little time for solitude, and less desire for abstract thought. For about three years my books were set aside, and I read but little. During this period I became intimate with a Catholic, my relations with whom were such as to teach me something of Catholic doctrine, yet drive me, if possible, further than I already was from the Catholic Church, to attract me to Catholicism yet render it even more impossible for me to become a Catholic. To please my friend I read Milner's "Ends of Controversy," but though I admired the logical coherence of Catholic doctrine, I saw in Catholicism a mere *reductio ad absurdum* of Christianity, and turned from it. At times I

thought the Catholic Faith to be the logical outcome of a belief in a definite revelation, but this, so far from causing me to embrace Catholicism, made me shut my eyes to the existence of such a revelation.

Still at times the beliefs of my childhood held sway. I am prone to write as if my religious evolution had ever been steadily progressive, but this is far from having been the case; my diary tells of frequent relapses to former modes of thought, and indeed I was a kind of mental pendulum. In times of deep fear or trouble I forgot all about philosophy, ignored all evolutionary theories, and cried aloud to the God of my childhood. On one occasion I remember being sore pressed by a great trouble which threatened to crush out all the joy of my life. All night I paced up and down my room, dreading the news the morning light would bring.

I had prayed and no help had come. In my room was a picture of Raphael's Madonna, and as I stood before it, in my despair, there came the thought of the millions who sought Mary's aid. Kneeling I implored her, if she really existed and had power, to use it on my

behalf. Morning dawned, and, worn out, I fell asleep kneeling on the ground. I was aroused by the knocking at my door of the bearer of a telegram which solved all my difficulties. Of course I told myself this was a mere coincidence. Of course I deemed silly and grossly superstitious the mere thought of Mary's intercession, yet at times I could not help feeling that if there was a God who heard and answered prayer, He had Himself set the seal on her supplication.

At the end of the period of which I write, I returned to England, where my life soon resumed its former channels, and I plunged into the study of Herbert Spencer. Still I read on, and with aching brain and unsatisfied heart I tried to solve the mystery surrounding human life.

Like every other human being, I had a craving for unity in variety, and the fact that Spencer's philosophy seemed to supply this, was perhaps one of the reasons why it appealed to me, though it was a reason of which I was quite unconscious.

Still there was something in his assertiveness which repelled me, and which contrasted

adversely with the critical methods of Kant. I could not follow him in his supposed identification of the facts of physical and mental causation; I thought he confounded the occasion with the cause, and I could not see that the co-relation of forces helped to explain why those forces existed, or who it was who co-related them. It seemed to me the old blunder of mistaking the How for the Why, and I was not carried away by his teaching as I should have been some years previously. I was not competent to gauge his law of the Persistence of Force, but he asked me to receive too much concerning the unknowable on the strength of his bare assertion, and my mind rebelled against it.

Still I read on, incompetent to solve the problems which my teachers raised, entangled in the arguments they advanced, yet unable to acquiesce in the conclusions they drew. Mr. Spencer's system seemed easy to grasp, and it flattered my vanity to think I understood it, whereas the impression was the result of my ignorance rather than of my knowledge. Since those days closer study has shown me that far from being simple, it is deeply meta-

physical. Much that he wrote concerning the "Absolute, which is not negative but positive, and is the indestructible element of consciousness which persists in all time and under all circumstances and which cannot cease till consciousness ceases," was too deep for me. Much that he taught concerning our "consciousness of the unconditioned," which is literally the "unconditioned consciousness," was beyond me. I failed to follow him in many of his assertions, and now I fail to recognise his logical right to make them; now, taught by others, I fail to see, if the First Cause necessitated by the phenomena of our own consciousness is of necessity unknown, how we can dogmatise concerning it, how obtain extensive and complex knowledge about "a universal unknowable, unthinkable cause," whose "being is absolutely certain and its non-being unthinkable." I fail to see how Mr. Spencer can assert the Unknowable to be the "infinite eternal energy which underlies all phenomena, the infinite existence which transcends consciousness, the vital energy of all creeds and religions." Even now I cannot follow him in his distinction between existence and Being,

nor can I understand him when he tells us that the Absolute, which by the laws of logical deduction is demonstrated to be to our minds a pure negation, is psychologically the only existence. At one time he seems to say that logic proves the absolute to be "a pure negation conceived merely by the negation of conceivability," and assures us that we are "incapable of knowing it as finite," while at another, having seemingly acquired much definite knowledge concerning it, he affirms the idea of it to be "the necessary datum of consciousness with a higher warrant than any other whatever," and the very "basis of our intelligence." I am, I own, utterly incapable of having any consciousness either faint or vivid, of that great Unknown to which we are forbidden by Mr. Spencer to assign any attributes, nor can I see in that real existence, which is, he tells us, given to it by contrast with the relative, that reconciliation of religion, philosophy and science which Mr. Spencer claims to have made manifest.

The Persistent Power of Mr. Spencer does not satisfy me. His Ultimate of Ultimates is no God for me; his doctrines of causation, the

relativity of knowledge, and the unknowable are insufficient to satisfy my needs. To use the words of a great writer who helped me then, and has helped me ever since, "the undeveloped terms of an infinite mathematical series claim my reverence no more than those which have been ascertained, and I can find no reason for worship in the mere fact that the series cannot be completed." I fail utterly to see how Mr. Spencer's sensations justify him in saying that there is or is not a positive unknowable, capable of being diagnosed. While studying the works of Herbert Spencer, I studied also those of the writers who are opposed to him. Perhaps it was due to this fact, and to previous study that when later I tried to master his teaching on that cognition of self which he considers negatived by the laws of thought, I was armed against the fallacies it contains and so could not consent to accept my mind at second hand as the product of that external matter which is known only by the cognition of that very single and identical mind, the cognition of which is declared to be impossible. I had been taught to enter into the true antithesis of subject and object, and to see that as such



they are not contradictory, had learnt to realise that self-cognition is possible and that union and identity, difference and antagonism, are neither identical with each other nor complementary qualities. At an earlier stage I was for a time carried away by Mr. Spencer's promise to unravel the problems that puzzled me, though never satisfied by his attempt to do so. I think what attracted me to his teaching was the claim that it was the outcome of the discoveries of science, the last product of the evolution of human progress. This claim impressed me as it ever does the unlearned. Still after a while I realised that his teaching in no way satisfied my needs.

## CHAPTER XII

### THEORY AND PRACTICE

I AM not attempting a criticism of Spencer's philosophy ; of course I am utterly incapable of criticising it. I merely wish to show how it affected me and how unsatisfying it is to people like myself. Mr. Balfour tells us that "we desire, and desire most passionately, when we are most ourselves, to give our services to that which is universal and that which is abiding." And I think this is the result of, and is inseparable from, the yearning to find ourselves in the Eternal Reality. Man's life is not its own centre ; our hearts can find no rest in the transient things of time, and we desire imperatively to find ourselves in that which is imperishable. Human personality craves for union with an Eternal personality ; we grope in the dark and clutch at the love and friendship of our fellows, that we may merge our personality in theirs, but this cannot satisfy us.

The finite craves for the Infinite, and only in union with it can it find rest, yet "in no impersonal God can we find ourselves, to no such God can we give ourselves"—and no such conception can satisfy our aching brains and craving hearts. It is only when we realise God as the source of our personality and its centre of gravity, only when we in this sense find ourselves in Him, that we find rest and peace; only when we learn through Christ to know one in whom the human nature is united to the Divine that we realise the perfect satisfaction our natures so passionately desire. This is, I think, why agnostic philosophy failed to satisfy me. Moreover, I shrank from its practical results, though at times those very results made me wish that it were true.

To me, belief in agnosticism meant the right to do just as I liked, and though this at times attracted me towards it, yet I dared not throw aside all religious restraint. When formerly I tried to assimilate agnostic theories and shut my eyes to the knowledge of God, I was leading a quiet country life in a retired country home with no violent temptations at hand; but now my life was changed, and at the time

of which I write I had many motives for shutting my eyes to the claims of duty. I had, above all, one object which could be attained only by wrong-doing. Sometimes I longed to be happy at all costs; at others to do right, let the consequences be what they might. To those living in future ages, who "by realised advance towards heterogeneity," have become "keenly sensitive to altruistic pleasures," the object of my desire might be no temptation; but to me, it was an almost irresistible enticement. To do wrong, and thus secure happiness for myself seemed conduct justified by the teaching of Mr. Spencer, if his teaching was true. In the "Data of Ethics," Mr. Spencer teaches that the life of the social organism must rank above the life of the unit, but the mass of accumulated tendencies in me were not heavy enough to outweigh self-interest, and I cared little for the interests of the social organism as compared with my own. I had by no means reached the state of evolution in which it is necessary for a "higher equity to prescribe the limitations of altruistic proclivities," and mere utilitarian tribal instincts did not en-

gender in me self-sacrifice. If my egotism was merely due to the fact that I was not sufficiently evolved for the higher sense perceptions of the human race to have accumulated in me, I saw no reason why I should control it. If the voice that warred with my selfish interests and inclinations proceeded likewise from accumulated sense perceptions, I saw not why I should listen to it. At that time to give up my faith in God involved, I thought, the right to make, at all costs, the best of this world; and I honestly admit, that I neither could nor would have followed the dictates of duty, had it not been for the thought of God and a future state. Nothing but the Inner Voice which told me that there existed a righteous Judge who will judge the earth and punish wrong-doing, prevented me from following the course which seemed to lead to present happiness. In my heart of hearts I knew that this Voice proceeded neither from individual nor from accumulated sense perceptions—I knew the Voice of Conscience to be of Divine origin, and I dared not stifle it; I knew that a day of reckoning would come, and I dared not defy it. Professor Green

tells us that "we need in our ordinary moments the impression of the great Task-master's eye upon us," and from this eye I dared not turn away. Of course I know that Mr. Spencer would say that the deductions I drew from his teaching were illogical, and displayed a want of perception on my part of his fundamental principle. Our conduct is, he tells us, the mere registration of expediency on the consciousness of the organism, and therefore he would say that I could but act in accordance with the state of altruistic development to which I had attained, a state determined, that is to say, by the "distribution of unthinking forces in pre-solar æons" and by the experience of my "non-human and human ancestors." But I am not relating how I ought to have felt and reasoned; I am stating how the teachers with whom I came in contact influenced me. In spite of Mr. Spencer's teaching, I realised that the condition of a thing is not its fundamental cause, and that even if my intellectual and moral powers had an evolution corresponding to my physical nature, still this did not destroy my free-will, nor lessen the power of God who gave to man that law of evolution.

Perhaps I should have been more permanently influenced by Mr. Spencer's teaching if I had come in contact with it at an earlier stage, but Kant's deduction of human freedom from the categorical imperative helped to protect me from Mr. Spencer's theories. It is difficult for me to express clearly what I mean, but though a theoretical knowledge of certain truths seems to add no strength to the firmness with which they are held, it does seem to add strength to the power of combating adverse theories. So at least it seems to me, and the fact that in the moral law Kant finds a law of causality through freedom, helped me to reject the teaching of Mr. Spencer. No, I saw clearly that though the categorical imperative of Kant may be manifested through external circumstances, it was implanted by the hand of God. I had struggled to the explicit knowledge of certain fundamental truths; these truths I could not make square with Herbert Spencer's theories, and this prevented me from blindly accepting him as my master. Swayed by him I of course was; yet I was to some extent able to resist the charm of simplicity that I thought I found in his teaching.

I had realised that accumulated experiences were inadequate to account for the ethical facts of life, and that the voice of conscience was independent of my desire and of the praise and blame of others. I knew that the truths on which the moral law is based must necessarily be ethical. I recognised that certain ethical truths appealed to the mind with the consciousness of necessity, and I believed that God had created the mind with eyes to see these moral truths. I could not doubt that He who gave me the power of knowing good and evil, and of striving after spiritual ideals, had also provided some satisfaction for my ethical needs.

I had fought my way upwards, and was not prepared to begin again and waste my life over what Mr. Harrison calls "an everlasting conundrum to be everlastingly given up." I saw that the personality of man necessitated the Personality of God, for none can give that which he hath not. Goodness and truth were the highest attributes of which I had any conception, and these must God possess. I thought, I felt, I loved, and from my Creator must these powers be derived; nay, if He



possessed them not, then my conception of Him would be lower than that I had of the meanest of my fellow-creatures. I think that in this matter, as in many others, Mr. Wilfrid Ward helped me, and that he showed me many a weak point in Mr. Spencer's armour, but at no time could I have been satisfied by that "nothing" which Mr. Ward tells us Mr. Spencer thinks he can, by dressing up, make into "something." The "nothing about which we can know something," was not the God of whose existence I was convinced, not the personal God in Whom I believed and about Whom I longed to know.

Mr. Wilfrid Ward tells us that Mr. Spencer has bequeathed us a "few capital letters" for a religion. Even with capital letters the absolute negation of personality afforded me no outlet for those needs of my nature which imperatively demanded a field of exercise; that craving for something to worship and love, which nothing but a person capable of understanding my needs could satisfy. It was self-evident to me that if such a person had made me, He must have made me for a purpose; that having made me for a purpose

and endowed me with free-will, he must have made that purpose known to me, and with Him I must have spiritual and ethical relations. I believed in God, and I felt the need of a "Father in heaven" who could understand and help me.

## CHAPTER XIII

### PRACTICAL NEEDS

THOUGH I spent a good deal of time over the pages of Herbert Spencer, other influences were at work, and my unrest found many outlets impossible in the retirement of my former home. At this time I led a life full of inconsistencies and contradictions, but one in which religious influences were at work; more and more I felt the need of religion, more and more I noticed its fruits in the lives of others and longed to know the truth. My desire for truth was no longer a mere thirst for knowledge, but a wish for a helm in the storm of life, a compass by which to steer my barque, a fixed star to guide my course, and a pilot who could confidently set that course. I longed to know the truth, and prayed for it. Indeed, even when I professed but little faith in God, I had prayed in hours of danger and difficulty, illogically and inconsistently enough, perhaps, but

"the heart has its reasons that reason knows not," and "needs that logic cannot satisfy." When in my youth I had prayed I had been answered; and in spite of all adverse theories, this seemed to me a reason for praying again in the hour of trial. My very nature demanded that I should seek supernatural help in time of trouble, and I turned instinctively to God for help. Fools and madmen think it clever to destroy, and I, too, had thought it clever to pick to pieces the religion of my childhood, but though I had picked to pieces, I had not utterly destroyed; and I knew that God existed, and turned to Him in the hour of need. For me, as for Carlyle, it was flatly inconceivable that "intellect and moral emotion could have been put into man by an entity that had none of it himself." Woven in the very tissue of my mind was the belief in a good and just God, and the conviction that He had revealed His will to man, and that there existed a future state where obedience to His commands will be rewarded and disobedience punished. Written indelibly on my heart was the belief in my own immortality, and the more I read and thought, the deeper grew my conviction that

God had made me for an eternal purpose; that He had in some way revealed the purpose to me, and shown me the means by which I might accomplish it. To seek this revelation seemed to me the chief pursuit of life, to find it seemed the one thing which made life worth living. I knew it must be within my reach, for it seemed to me clearly impossible that a God whose essence was wisdom and goodness could have made man what he is, and have given to him the desire to know Him and His will, and yet not have provided for the satisfaction of that desire. I could not believe that He had given him the thirst for supernatural knowledge and truth, yet had provided no fountain at which that thirst could be assuaged. "Why trouble about these questions?" said many to me. But to me these were the only questions worth troubling about. The "other-worldliness" which Goethe so much detested was to me the only thing that made life worth living; so far from taking away the dignity and glory of the present life, it gave it its only adequate purpose. There was in me, I fear, no danger of that undue subordination of egotism against which Mr.

Herbert Spencer protests, but, on the contrary, my own personality was the initial point from which I regarded all others, and my eternal future was to me the question of supreme importance.

My whole nature demanded a personal God, and, do what I would, I could not believe this desire to be vain, I knew it to be the craving after the one great reality, the impress left by the Creator on the soul of man. Herbert Spencer had himself shown me in his "First Principles" that the assumption of a first cause is a necessity of thought, and every line of argument I had followed had brought more clearly before me the fact that a personal God could alone resolve the riddle of the universe, alone supply the wants of man. Of course I had repeatedly been told that personality implied limitation, but this I knew to be false. I knew that though the idea of limitation is characteristic of the personality of man, this arises from no inherent attribute of personality, but from its union with the finite, and I had been taught that if we look beyond the conditioned to the unconditioned, limitation ceases to exist.

Kant had long since taught me that there

was as much sense in speaking of the first cause as personality, love, or goodness, as there was in speaking of Him as power; that "natural theology could name no single distinctive attribute of the Deity whether denoting intelligence or will that apart from anthropomorphism was more than a mere word." Those people who reproached me with anthropomorphism in attributing to Him personality, seemed to forget that the conceptions and language of human beings are necessarily human, seemed to forget that they, as well as I, were limited to human phraseology, and that, inadequate as such language no doubt is, we can but express our highest conceptions in the highest terms of which we have cognisance. Charges of anthropomorphism, therefore, did not frighten me; indeed, I had learnt to see in the fact of the universal tendency to personification an instinctive recognition of the personality of God. Personality alone responded to my highest conception, and alone satisfied my deepest needs; for "there is nothing but heart we can love, nothing but mind we can respect, and nothing but a perfect combination of both that we can adore." I could not think of God save as a

Person, and, thinking of Him thus, I could not believe that He had given me ethical needs and spiritual ideals and yet given me no means of satisfying them. I could not believe that He had given me an intense desire to know Him, yet had given me no means of acquiring that knowledge. Many of my teachers urged me to put myself and humanity in their proper place; told me that, when I realised that the world had not been created for me, but I by the world, then I would cease to demand personal relations with "the energy which invaded time and space," cease to grope after the unattainable, and learn to realise that as I was but "an atom of this world, and this world but an atom of the universe," so it was absurd of me to want to deem myself in any special sense the object of God's care. I heeded them no longer. Firmer and firmer grew the belief that I could know God, and that He knew and cared for me. The vision of God revealed by Nature did not suffice, it did but bewilder me. On every side apparent waste and failure and the heart-bewildering problem of evil met my view. I dared not gaze upon "Nature red in tooth and claw" and yet deem this world the



sole end and aim of life. Moreover, my old calm and sheltered life was gone and difficulties and temptations pressed upon me. I needed a religion, not merely as an answer to intellectual puzzles, but as a comfort in sorrow and as a guide in daily life,—“a very present help in time of trouble.” I realised that natural religion could never satisfy my needs or guide my steps, and is, as Mr. Mallock tells us, but an alluring voice calling far off through the fog, “Follow me,” yet leaving us to fall over every precipice that besets our path. No religion could satisfy me which did not throw light on the problem of man’s relation to the infinite, the origin of the universe, and the whence, why, whither of life, — none which did not satisfy that desire to find the One in the many which I had so long unconsciously striven to satisfy. I knew that there was a God, and that He was good and wise; I felt sure that He had made man for a purpose,—yet what did I know of that purpose? I felt the need of a revelation, but knew not where to find it.

I longed for a knowledge of Him and His will, but how could I attain to it? In vain I stretched out my hands to reach up to Him,

in vain I strained my reason to find out. "I cannot reach to Him," I cried, "unless He will bend down to me; unless He will reveal Himself to me I cannot know His will." The religion I needed was just the kind of religion that Mr. Andrew Lang condemns, one that teaches how a personal God created the universe; how He deals with it and sustains it; how He formed man in His own image and has relations with him; one which told me of man's life beyond the grave and the conditions of his eternal happiness. This was the revelation I needed, the quest of which seemed to me the pursuit of supreme interest. But where was it to be found? When considering what such a revelation would be like, two things appeared to me to be obvious. First, that if it existed at all it would be infallibly true; second, that it would teach man what God would have him believe and do, teach him how to worship God, how to reach the highest development of which his nature is capable, how to attain to ultimate happiness. If I could not believe in a personal God who was good and just and yet had given no revelation of Himself, still less could I conceive

One who could give a revelation which was uncertain or misleading. If there be a revelation it must, I saw clearly, contain truths to which my unaided reason was incapable of attaining, else it would but limit the activity of reason. It could reveal no truth which contradicted or cramped reason, for that too was God's gift; but it must be superior to reason, and deal with truths of a higher order, for, though firmly convinced of the reliability of reason, I realised how limited was its sphere. After all my long years of searching after truth what had reason taught me?

## CHAPTER XIV

### HIGH CHURCH, LOW CHURCH, BROAD CHURCH, NO CHURCH

WHERE could I find this revelation from God, if indeed such revelation existed? I did not deem it could be aught else but Christianity, yet Christianity as I knew it did not seem in any way adequate to my needs. Christianity as I knew it was represented by Anglicanism, and possessed neither unity nor certitude; no two Anglicans were agreed as to what was true Christianity, and the teaching of the Church of England was all confusion and contradiction. It was to me simply impossible to accept the Anglican Church as the organ of truth, impossible to see in it God's ambassador to man, the channel through which He revealed His will, impossible to find in it the ladder by which the mind of man was to scale the heights of the infinite, or the link that was to bind the creature with the Creator. No, that to

me was impossible. Never have I been able to recognise a voice which speaks in discordant tones as the voice of God; at no time have I been able to see in a Church which teaches contradictory doctrine the organ of truth; now it was absolutely impossible for me to think that a Church which taught High, Low and Broad Church doctrines, and whose official representatives contradicted each other at every turn, was the teacher sent by God to teach me the truth.

During this period my mind was a strange mixture of discordant phases of thought, and my life a strange mixture of frivolous gaiety and serious study. I was not at rest, and at times I plunged into amusements in the vain hope of drowning thought. Materialists had told me that no supersensible knowledge was possible, some writers had declared that matter did not exist, and others said that neither mind nor matter could be accepted as objective realities; yet all such teaching had failed to convince me, and when alone, I found myself face to face with the idea of God and of human responsibility. I knew that I was, I knew that God was; I knew that He had im-

planted in my mind the knowledge of certain necessary truths, to deny which was to commit intellectual suicide. I knew that these truths involved consequences of stupendous import.

In vain I sought to turn from the thoughts which these truths suggested; in vain I sought with the playthings in this earthly schoolroom to distract my mind from the lessons of life. Late at night I would come home from a dance tired and dissatisfied, and instead of going to bed would read till dawn some books dealing with the questions that perplexed me. I read strange literature in those days and frequented strange lecture halls, but after seeing the great mind of Spinoza so dazzled with the light of God's presence in the universe that he not only saw it over all but saw everything as God, I was saved from the influence of flippant blasphemy and of assertive atheism. The teaching of Mr. Foote and his like revolted me, and I turned from it in disgust; but where to find help I knew not.

My mind was in strange confusion. We lived in Dover Street. My mother went to St. George's, Hanover Square, of which Mr. Capel Cure, a cleric of Low Church views,

was the incumbent; my sister was extremely High Church, and went to St. Alban's, Holborn. Each at times took me to her place of worship, but the fact that in the one I heard condemned as heresy what was taught in the other, and that the doctrines taught in these two Anglican churches were in direct opposition, did not raise my opinion of the teaching office of the Church of England, but rather at times made me prone to believe that Christianity was only a beautiful dream, a will-o'-the-wisp, which lacked tangibility, since its professed teachers could so little agree about its most essential truths. Still I believed God had made a revelation to man, and still I longed to find a teacher who could tell me what that revelation was.

I was told that Dean Stanley would help me, but his teaching seemed purely negative. At no time did Broad Churchmen help me; they believed too much or too little. Their strange attempt to dress supernatural religion in the garments of modern Rationalism did not appeal to me. They seemed to dissect the body of truth in the operating-room of public opinion, and to wrap the corpse in the shroud

of Rationalism. Clergymen who tried to suit their doctrine to the spirit of the age, and to propitiate the *Zeit-geist* by tearing to pieces the body of Truth did not help me—I saw them throwing one by one their doctrines to the wolves, who would fain devour the whole, and I felt that the issue was not uncertain. I felt that they were not the guardians of the treasure of Truth, otherwise had they realised that she cannot die and is for ever one. Men who hope to explain Christianity by explaining it away, did not appeal to me in the least. I think Canon Liddon was the only Anglican clergyman who helped me. One day when he was lunching in my mother's house I spoke to him of my difficulties. I afterwards attended a course of sermons he was giving at St. Paul's. He, who of all Anglicans helped me most, helped me to the Catholic Church where his teaching finds its logical outcome, but this was not till later.

But Anglican churches were by no means the only ones which I frequented. I was a member of the Sunday Lecture Society, and through it I learnt of many a strange service. Pilgrimages to Mr. Moncure Conway's at



Camden, or to South Place Chapel at Finsbury, were varied by frequent visits to the services of Mr. Voysey, which on the whole pleased and interested me, though, truth to tell, the adaptation of the Anglican liturgy to his theistic worship jarred somewhat upon my sense of fitness.

I never thought that I had found the truth in the teaching of Mr. Voysey, and though at first I liked his services, yet after a while they seemed no more than a solemn farce. He held a service of prayer and praise, while at the same time he seemed to teach that prayer could not influence God, and that its reflex action on our mind was the only benefit derived from it. He drew no distinction between prayer for physical and for spiritual blessings, seeing clearly that psychology is as much governed by law as are bodily health, summer sunshine, and winter rain. His attitude in this respect was more logical than that of those who urge us to pray for spiritual blessings, yet deny the power of prayer when the laws of nature are involved, for of course law reigns in the spiritual as well as in the material world, to it mind as well as matter is subject. Still, if

Mr. Voysey were right, I for one could not continue to pray. Moreover, I saw that if he were right, and prayer to God was in its true sense useless, then useless too was all prayer to man. Necessity became our only law.

For me Mr. Voysey taught either too much or too little.

I knew that prayer was heard. I realised that if prayer for spiritual needs can find an answer, so too can prayer for mental and physical requirements. I had learnt to realise that in the higher realms of truth mathematical demonstration is impossible, and with a certitude stronger than proof I knew that prayer was answered. Just as in the hour of danger prayer rose unbidden to my lips, so deep down in my heart was the firm conviction that God heard and answered our petitions. Personal experience is stronger than theory: I had prayed, my prayer had been answered, and I believed in the efficacy of prayer. Now I know that the law that causes faith to remove mountains is no less a law of God than that which causes water to find its own level, and I know too, that, if I may so speak, God has

bound Himself by law to answer every humble and fervent prayer.

Unless my memory misleads me, Mr. Voysey told us that future punishment was a myth, and that happiness and misery in this life were the sole reward and punishment of virtue or vice. I think it was to him that some young men wrote a letter saying that since virtue brought him pleasure he was welcome to its practice and pursuit, but that for their part vice, judiciously and economically indulged in, afforded them greater happiness, and they challenged him to show them why, on his grounds, they should not pursue it. I remember the letter being read aloud, and answered on the following Sunday; but the "answer" when it came seemed no answer at all, and I thought the young men had the best of the argument.

## CHAPTER XV

### FROM BUDDHA TO CHRIST

OF all the lecturers at the Sunday Society, I think Professor Zerffi helped me most, though the effect of his lectures was the reverse of that they were intended to produce. He gave a course on "What Christianity owes to Buddhism," and on "Ignorance and Dogma." In these he treated the Christian Church as the great enemy of enlightenment, and spoke of her with the intense bigotry and narrow-mindedness so common to the "free-thinker," but his lectures were of great assistance to me. It was not then the fashion to flirt with Buddhism, and though I had indirectly become acquainted with some of the teaching contained in the sacred books of the East, I knew nothing of their origin—fortunately for me it was not the philosophic but the historic aspect of Buddhism with which Dr. Zerffi dealt, and he tried rather to cast discredit on Christianity

than to induce his hearers to drink of that poisoned draught of philosophic Buddhism with which Theosophy has made us all familiar. I did not know that the relative antiquity of the sacred books of the East was misdated by Dr. Zerffi, and that the doctrines to which he alluded were mere accretions to be found in no Buddhist classics earlier than the fifth century—but when he maintained that the doctrines of Christianity were borrowed from Buddhism it was the universality and antiquity of these beliefs which impressed me. I had read much about the universality of truth, and somehow, when he showed that Christian truths were embedded in the remote teaching of the East, the fact seemed to tell rather in favour of Christianity than against it.

I had been often told that no religion contains anything peculiar to itself, except its errors; the circumstance, therefore, that Buddhism contained much of the teaching of Christianity gave additional weight to that teaching. I spoke on the subject to a friend, who enlarged on the fact that mankind sprang from one common stock; that, in the days of his innocence, man knew much of the mind

of God; that while sin had blurred the light of the primeval revelation, man bore with him at the dispersion of nations refracted rays of the truth. I saw that if this were true then it was probable that if at Christ's coming man's knowledge of the truth became deeper, purer, and more developed, a likeness would still remain between the early light, its refracted rays, and the noontide sun. This idea sank into my mind, and somehow gave me a new conception of many Christian truths. When I learned that the Egyptian Pantheon was a gradual accretion, and that right back in the very dawn of history there were records of the belief in a single pure spirit, "perfect in all respects, all wise, almighty, supremely good," of Whom the sacred writings of the Egyptian taught that He was "the only true living God, self-originated," "Who exists from the beginning," "Who has made all things but has himself not been made," I realised more and more that from the first God had revealed Himself, that in the beginning the light of His Eternal Truth shone clearly in the mind of man, and that though sin has blurred and refracted that light, yet "The Great Master"

(Cabon Massa), who the Australian blacks tell us "hateth evil," has not left Himself without a witness in any land; that refracted and distorted though the rays of God's truth may be, still they shine in the heart and enlighten the intellect of every man that cometh into the world. In the black man's "corroboree" and in the white man's hymn, I learnt to recognise not only the outward expression of that inward yearning for God which fills the heart of humanity, but the deep-lying conviction of mankind that God can hear and understand. "The sin-laden hearts of men crave for God, and we strain our sin-dimmed vision to discern Him," for none but He can fill the aching void within; nay, even those who deny Him so hunger, that, when refusing supernatural bread they feed on the empty husks of superstition. It is in vain for Mr. Grant Allen, and such as he, to try and find in the worship of ancestors the origin of religion, for the further we delve in the records of the past the clearer grows the evidence of a primeval revelation; nor does Mr. Grant Allen attempt to explain the belief in the supernatural which caused the ghost-cultus of primeval men. Not only has man in every age felt the need of

something more satisfying than barren materialism, not only has he at all times believed in a God, but from the earliest ages he has believed in the existence of a Revelation from God to man. As Plutarch says, "Cities may be found without walls, without literature, without money, without theatre or circus, but a city without a sanctuary, without a deity, without prayers, without vows, without prophecies, without sacrifice to obtain good things and avert evil things, such a city no man ever beheld or ever will behold." Coeval with the foundation of the city of Menes was the creation of a great temple to Phthah—"The Revealer"—by whom the world and man were created and by whom "the hidden thought of the Supreme Being was made manifest to His creatures." Everywhere from the first there seemed to have prevailed the idea of incarnation and the idea of priesthood, and I knew not how to account for these ideas save by the admission of their truth.

It may seem strange that I was helped to realise the truth of Christian teaching by the consideration that it was embedded in the earliest records and traditions of humanity,



whereas I was repelled from Spencerian philosophy by the thought that some of its teaching seemed a revival of ancient Hindu theories with which Kant had familiarised my mind. I say *seemed*, for though Mr. Spencer's great work is the synthesization of philosophy, I at that time regarded him rather as a teacher of new truths than as the reconciler of philosophic differences. I note this inconsistency but cannot explain it, unless by the fact that Christianity, the outcome of Judaism, professed to have existed from the beginning, and that I had been attracted to Spencer's teaching because I believed it to be the last product of intellectual evolution. Be that as it may the effect was produced.

Moreover, I had wandered in thought amid the ruins of Egyptian greatness, and I at times found it impossible to think of Christianity as the mere outcome of intellectual progress—hard sometimes to believe at all in the progress of humanity or to realise that we were intellectually superior to those whose civilisation was a thing of the past. When therefore Professor Zerffi proved that in the Vedas of India and in the Institutes of Menu, are again

and again found records of a belief in God, and that the further we trace back the history of man, the more clear becomes the fact that from the beginning of recorded time the human mind entertained and cherished the idea of an invisible Creator, he emphasised the Christian explanation of the religious idea and the fact of a primeval revelation; when he showed me Christian truths embedded in early records, he led me to think that these truths formed part of an original revelation.

I now see clearly that the evolutionist is bound by his own theory to believe in the truth of religion, for, if the belief in God and the soul's immortality were false, then the progress of the race would have brought us to a mental state inferior to that of our animal ancestors. To prove that the existence of God is a falsehood would be to give to the ape, which believes in nothing but the material world around him, a plane of thought higher, because truer, than that of us, his supposed descendants. Nor are merely anti-catholic evolutionists in better plight, for if the evolution of the race leads to enlightenment, a rigorous logic imperiously drives us to the con-

clusion that Catholicism is true, for Catholicism is the religion of the majority of the most highly evolved. No mere self-directed evolution of matter can explain the genesis of mind, and the greatness of man is unassailed by theories such as this. St. Thomas entertained the idea of the possibility of spontaneous generation, and held that it would be in no way derogatory to the power of God to think that He had infused into matter activity sufficient to generate organic life, and to differentiate and evolve that life under certain conditions in accordance with certain laws which He had laid down; and I cannot see aught derogatory to the wisdom and power of Almighty God, or lowering to the dignity of man in the theory of the evolution of man. Even if God in creating the slime of the earth gave to it power to evolve into the human body by assimilating to itself all the constituents of matter, permeating itself through untold ages with relics of the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdom, so that it might at last become a fitting altar-stone on which the spirit of man might offer sacrifice on behalf of all creation, that would in no way obscure God's omnipo-

tence nor in any way detract from the greatness of man's intellectual and spiritual life. It in no way alters the fact that man possesses a soul which is spiritual, and that his nature was assumed by Christ as the instrument of the world's redemption, but rather throws a new ray of light on that redemption, for which, as St. Paul tells us, "all creation groaned and travailed." As I have already said, though at the time when I attended Dr. Zerffi's lectures I could not disentangle the theories presented to me, and though I knew not what influences moulded my thoughts, yet I found new interest in delving among the records of the past and fresh interest in examining the claims of Christianity.

One Sunday I went to hear a sermon on "The moral defects of the character of Christ." The preacher objected to the prominence given to the moral teaching of the Man of Galilee, and said that for his part he preferred the example of Mr. Fletcher to that of Christ. He went on to denounce what he called the egotism and self-assertiveness of Christ, quoted the words "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life," "I am the Light of the World," and

"I and My Father are One,"—said such self-assertiveness was incompatible with true greatness, and criticised adversely our Lord's conduct to His mother when in the temple she sought Him sorrowing. I knew nothing of the author of the "Purple Island," and as I had no right to call myself a Christian I ought not to have been shocked, but I was both shocked and pained at hearing such a sermon. Strauss says that Jesus is the supreme genius of history, and Renan tells us that no greater than He shall ever arise: "*Jésus ne sera pas surpassé, son culte se rejeunera sans cesse.*" Even those who deny Christ feel that He is not as other men. Somehow this sermon made me realise that I knew Him to stand on a different platform from the rest of humanity, and His relation to His mother to be different from that of other sons,—it drew out my veneration for Christ in a way that surprised me and awakened feelings that had long slumbered.

It was about this time that I came indirectly under the spell of Kingdon Clifford's influence. I was eager to know all he taught; he checked my progress to Christianity, still he did not

convince me. One after another the waves that bore me onward seemed to break and roll back, yet slowly and surely the tide of truth was winning its way. Clifford's translation of Darwin's propositions into ethical commands was not the teaching I needed. No "cosmic emotion" sufficed to satisfy the craving within, and even the "sifted sediment of a residuum" seemed better than no religion at all. The fact that Clifford denied the immortality of the soul made him no teacher for me. I had groped my way by painful steps to the explicit belief in, and realisation of truths I could not relinquish. Indeed from this time I seemed to have so firm a hold on these truths, that no writer obscured my realisation of them.

I knew that there existed a personal God with whom I had personal relations, a person with a character and attributes intelligible to me. I no longer thought of Kantian proofs of "the Categorical Imperative," but undoubtedly recognised in conscience the voice of God. I believed that God had made me, had given me an immortal soul, and had done so

for an eternal purpose. Though I knew not clearly what that purpose was, yet this in itself separated Him by an infinite chasm, not only from the monstrous "Irrational Will" of Schopenhauer, that stream of tendency which maketh for evil—but also from the "stream of tendency which maketh for good" of Arnold and his school. This I knew. When therefore the disciples of Schopenhauer told me that the visible universe was but the manifestation of blind irrational will which, pregnant with indefinable desire, had rushed blindly into life and manifested itself alike in man and in a stone, I knew it was false; I knew that no such will could produce law and order, beauty and virtue. And when they told me that existence is a sin—that the affirmation of the will to live is the source of all evil, and its denial the height of virtue and the goal of our existence, they spoke a language I could not understand. When Clifford bade me not think of saving my soul, and told me not to think of God, because there was no such Being, I turned from him. He bade me put society in place of God and my soul. I cared little for

the ultimate perfection of the race—I did care about my soul, I did want to know about God—and having once seen the universe as the creation of a personal God, I could no longer believe religion to be the mere outcome of my own mind. Clifford bade me set the temporal interests of the tribe first, then my country, then mankind; but what were these compared with my own eternal welfare and that of those I loved? Mr. Spencer had taught me that, viewed as a whole, human life was good because it ever tends to the good of the race, but what cared I for generations yet unborn? I cared nothing. I wanted life to be good for me and those dear to me, and I wanted our lives to last for ever.

I had fought my way out of materialism, whether explicit or implied, and it had no longer any power over me. Moreover, I felt the need of religion. I neither could nor would share the utter loneliness of Clifford's Godless existence, nor content myself with "an empty heaven and a soulless earth." I neither could nor would accept any teaching that jarred with the sense of my personal immortality.



Mr. Justice Stephen tells us that he does not see the necessity for religion, and that the world can get on as well without a God as with one; but after all, what are "The Infinite Substance" of Spinoza, "The Absolute" of Hegel, "The Ultimate Reality" of Mr. Spencer, the Kantian "Ding-an-Sich" but blurred and distorted shadows of that unknown God whom Paul declared to the Athenians; what but irre-recognisable caricatures of the great I AM, who most fully reveals Himself to man in the historic Christ? Religion satisfies a raging thirst in the heart of man. When dying of thirst the African bushman often sees the mirage of inland seas before his eyes; but, if water did not exist or if water failed to quench thirst, such visions would neither appear nor have any meaning. So it is with those distorted ideas of God; they are the mirage of our desires, they fail to satisfy the heart of man, yet they bear testimony to the existence of Him for whom the human heart was created. I believe no falser words were ever spoken than those of Mr. Stephen, nor any that are more clearly disproved by the history of the human

race, and by my own heart. Truer far is the saying of Dr. Martineau, that religion is "rather the first root of life than the last blossom of thought." Without it life is not worth living, for the present is purposeless, the future a void, and existence a ghastly failure.

## CHAPTER XVI

### DAWNING LIGHT

SOME time after I came to London I had made the acquaintance of Father Gordon of the London Oratory, and Father Christie, S.J. From both of these I received great kindness, and when I began to believe a definite revelation had been given, I spoke to them about it. I was from the first greatly impressed by the wondrous patience and goodness of Catholic priests. Severely must I have taxed their forbearance, yet never did they lose patience with my interminable difficulties or fail to show me, a stranger, a kindness which would be inexplicable in any save the followers of the Good Shepherd. Father Gordon was the first priest I met. A Ritualist to whom I had indirectly been the means of showing the illogical nature of the ritualistic position, afterwards sought Father Gordon, was convinced of the truth of Catholicism, and was by him received into the

Church. Later, this friend wished me to be present when the sacrament of confirmation was administered in Cardinal Manning's private chapel, and after the ceremony I, with the others, knelt for the Cardinal's blessing, with a reverence that was entirely new to me. From the first I realised that Catholicism was quite different from any other religion with which I had ever come in close contact, different not only in degree, but in kind. As I grew to know more about the Catholic Church, and as I realised more and more fully the need of a definite revelation from God to man, in Catholicism alone did I see a possible satisfaction for that need. There was in Catholicism a strange unearthly something that both attracted and repelled me, and I determined to fathom the mystery. The more I learnt concerning it the more wonderful it seemed. Remember - I had wandered through many systems, and seen how powerless they were to retain their hold on the mind of man, or maintain in unity of thought a single family. When therefore I saw the vast world-wide unity of the Catholic Church, I realised that He who founded it could not have been as other men are, and that some

power was at work which was more than human.

Partly as a change from the deadly dull round of social functions which the cynical spirit of our age calls amusements, partly in the hope of drowning thought—partly perhaps from better motives, I at this time wished to work in the slums. Not being able to go alone, I sought an introduction to the “Helpers of the Holy Souls” in Cavendish Street, (nuns with whose work among the poor I had come in contact), and asked to be allowed to work with them. Well do I remember my first visit to the convent and the Rev. Mother’s question when I tendered my request.

“Have you so great a devotion to the Holy Souls that you wish to work with us?” she said kindly.

And then when I explained that I was not a Catholic and not even a Christian, and added, moved I know not by what impulse, that sometimes I was not quite sure whether I believed much in souls, but that I did believe in bodies, and was anxious to clothe and feed them, she answered with an eager smile—

“Come and work with us for bodies, and

with God's grace the day will come when you will work for souls."

And so I went. I went, too, to their convent each Monday afternoon when, amid the rush and whirl of the London season, Catholics snatch an hour to work in silence for the dead. There at the end of the meeting we went into a pretty little chapel for benediction, and then I seemed to live in another world, to feel the presence of an unseen power, and to find that rest and peace for which my soul craved.

I do not think that I believed in the truth of Catholicism, yet, as time went on, I instinctively turned to it in all my trials and difficulties.

Once when possessed by an intense and passionate desire for something which I had striven with frenzy to obtain yet which seemed unattainable, I went to the London Oratory. Then after struggling with myself for hours, I entered the confessional of a priest who was a stranger to me and said to him: "When Catholics want anything very badly they have Mass said to obtain it, do they not?" When he assented, I added, "I do not want you to

ask my name, and I think it is only honest to tell you that I am not a Catholic and not even a Christian, but I want you to accept an offering and to say Mass for something I want. I have tried everything else to attain my end—all has failed, and I wished to try this; the end I have in view is a good one."

"My child," he replied, "this sounds rather like superstition than like faith. I will not accept your offering, nor will I say Holy Mass for your intention, but I will say a Mass for *you*, and I will ask Almighty God to grant your desire if it is for your good." Then he spoke words such as only a Catholic priest can speak, and peace fell on my troubled soul.

Soon after this I asked Father Gordon to lend me a book on the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity, but I did not read much of it as I left London to go to a meeting of the British Association of Science, of which I was a member. While there a friend with whom I was talking of religion, said to me:—

"You see the idea of Trinity everywhere. Science will have to reckon with Christian dogma; the image of God is impressed on everything, on the body as on the soul. Sub-

stance itself is a trinity in unity: it is length multiplied by breadth, multiplied by depth; and without this trinity in unity you have nothing substantial, nothing real, and if it became a spiritual being, length and breadth and depth would possess consciousness and knowledge of their relative individuality. Take the elements of any science and you have a trinity in unity. Take geometry—analyse a line. What is it but an initial point, a final point, and a generating movement which unites the two? Take the solar ray, composed of force, of light, and of heat, and you have a trinity of forces in a unity of light. Why do the seven colours of the rainbow resolve themselves into three when analysed; why do the seven notes of the musical scale all lean on three fundamental notes, which produce the perfect chord? Why?"

I did not answer.

Later it was pointed out that being, knowing, and willing are the very essence of the soul, and constitute a trinity in unity. For man is a being that knows and wills. He knows that he is and that he wills: he wills to be and to know; and it is in the separation of



these powers that the evils of life arise, for "knowledge without love is arid, and love without knowledge is passion." I do not know whether all the statements that were made to me are correct, nor do I quote them for their intrinsic weight, but merely because they gave me a new interest in reading the book lent me by Father Gordon.

It has been said that when a man first learns the arithmetical fact that  $1 + 1 + 1 = 3$ , he is prone to doubt the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, but when he learns more and realises that  $1 \times 1 \times 1$  remains unity, he reconsiders his position. This is but a way of saying, "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing." Yet there are minds so constituted that they must try and grasp the little knowledge within their reach regardless of warnings against its acquisition, and mine was one of these.

Of course I do not mean that any reasoning or any facts of science or philosophy could teach man the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity; that is a truth known only through revelation. Still in the days of my youth my mind had been impressed with Christian teaching, and

somehow certain facts and lines of thought revived early impressions, and prepared the way for the acceptance of a religion in which the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity is authoritatively taught. I had long realised that variety in simplicity and plurality in unity were characteristic of beings and ideas. I had read enough philosophy to know that unity and variety are necessary to each other: that unity without multiplicity is sterile, that multiplicity without unity leads to chaos, and that all that is real, or true, or beautiful proceeds from the union of these two elements. I was now told that this plurality in unity and variety in simplicity takes the form of trinity in unity.

I had before met with the idea that trinity in unity is manifested in nature, but I had contented myself with thinking that if time, space, and causality are the very thought forms of our intellect, is it not surprising that we should range the material of our perceptions into representations, the character of which is trinitarian. But I then forgot the significance of the fact that God has created the human intellect. I believed that Intelligence had

created the universe; I saw the likeness that exists between the mind that pervades creation and the derivative intelligence which we know to be our own. I accounted for the trinity in unity which we see in nature by the essential character of the human mind; I saw in the mind of man the highest manifestation of the mind of God, and yet I did not see the bearing of the truths on each other. I am not here giving any weight to the statement that without a trinity in unity there is nothing real. It may not be true, but it set me thinking, and made me more determined than ever to read Father Gordon's book and try to understand the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, a doctrine to which my philosophical reading had given special interest.

I had long in one sense realised that all creation is the expression of the thought of God. As my conception of God had been derived from self and from the powers of my soul, I had never explicitly believed in a God without implicitly, though unconsciously, believing in the Blessed Trinity. Later, apart from the doctrine of the Trinity, God seemed to me a mere abstraction, not an ethical person. My

conception of Him had never, I think, been purely metaphysical, but personal.

At one time I had conceived a notion that Trinitarians taught that the Three Persons in the Blessed Trinity made One Person, a notion at once absurd and grossly heretical. For the very idea of number precludes infinitude, and to speak of an "infinite number" is to use contradictory terms. Such false notions, however, fell from me, and I now know the doctrine to be that expressed by St. Thomas, who says: "When we say Trinity in Unity we do not introduce number into the Unity of the essence, but count the plurality of Persons who are in the Unity of the Divine Nature as one counts the plurality of individuals belonging to the same nature." But here I pause, for how shall I dare to write concerning the Unity of Essence and the Trinity of Persons in God;—neither the wisest intellects on earth nor the sublimest intelligences in heaven can fathom the depths of this "Utterest Unity" and "Essential Personality," for none but God can understand the nature of God. Still, as the doctrine of the Ever Blessed Trinity satisfied needs and desires of my moral and

intellectual nature, and seemed to bring both heart and intellect into closer relations with God, it is necessary that I should say something of the way in which it came home to me.

## CHAPTER XVII

### CATHOLIC CLAIMS AND CREDENTIALS

WHEN I began to see dimly that God had given a definite revelation of Himself to man, and to suspect that the Catholic Church was the guardian and exponent of that revelation, I turned to her to see if she could explain the doctrine or throw any clear light on the problems that perplexed me. I realised that the nature of the Infinite must be beyond the comprehension of my finite mind. I knew that the greatest scientists of the day are unable to explain the life and growth of the tiniest plant, or the vital forces of the feeblest insect; that in order to understand God, I must myself be God. Still I felt that God had revealed Himself to men, knew that I could not reach up to Him, but felt sure He could stoop down to me, and the more I examined the claims of the Catholic Church, the more I saw in her, and in her alone, an adequate and suitable channel for a revelation.

I think the study of Herbert Spencer's philosophy may in some way have helped to attract me to Catholicism by clearing away all the accretions which had gathered between the two poles of thought represented by Agnosticism and Catholicism. Be this as it may, I turned from the religion of nescience to the religion of knowledge, from the religion of doubt which declares God to be unknowable, to the Church which promises that we shall know Him "even as we are known," and that the pure in heart shall see Him and possess eternally the Beatific Vision.

The more I knew of Catholicism the more the unity of the Catholic Church impressed me; and the more I studied her doctrines the more clearly I perceived their logical coherence. I sought for light in the works of various Catholic authors, and spell-bound, read the solution of problems which had long tormented me. I think that many of my difficulties had arisen from thinking of God as being in the abstract and of His attributes as of something added thereto, instead of realising that they are of His essence. Others had arisen from at times thinking of Him as acting

in the Past or Future instead of being Himself the Eternal Present. All this Catholic teaching made clear.

Gradually the Catholic doctrine of the Blessed Trinity was explicitly and clearly unfolded to me, and I found that the Catholic Church teaches that the most pure, simple, and undivided Unity of the Godhead lies in its nature; but that this "most simple nature is terminated by three real distinct subsistences or persons who form the only true and living Infinite. That no other distinction can be predicated of the Infinite than that arising from the relative opposition of origin between the terms." That the subject and object of Divine Intelligence and love must be within the Divine nature, a Trinity in Unity, producing in itself that co-existence of variety in simplicity, that harmonious plurality in unity, which is the source of all beauty and all thought.

With an Infinite and Eternal God but one thought is possible, embracing all time and all subjects; but one act of love, which has neither beginning nor end. I repeat this, because I think that many religious difficulties arise from ignoring the eternal Now-ness of



God, and the fact that for Him there is neither past nor future. To talk loosely of the foreknowledge of God is most misleading, for God knows all in the eternal present, and as He thinks so He loves; His whole being is but one eternal act, one act partaking of infinite self-consciousness and therefore of infinite personality. I had long realised that God is necessarily Eternal, because He is pure actuality and therefore of necessity pure Being, for duration and actuality are one; that He is infinite, for infinity is Being itself with the exclusion of limits; and I now realised that, being pure actuality, He is absolute activity and must therefore have infinite fecundity; that being pure actuality God is absolute simplicity, and therefore one, Infinite and Eternal; that as God is intelligent Being, so He must have a thought: He can have but one, and that must be infinite and eternal intelligence itself in the form of personality—the Word of God.

I saw that “a living God who necessarily conceives Himself, necessarily loves Himself through His conception, and that subjective love implies an objective love, and the two are essentially opposed and hence distinct.”

And this love is so actual and perfect as to be love itself in a state of personality, God the Holy Ghost. The very idea of love implies plurality, for it involves an object to be loved, and the object of Infinite love must be an adequate, that is, an Infinite object, and capable of making an adequate return, for only love returned conveys the idea of perfection. Now, as there cannot be two Infinities or two Eternals, this object must be God Himself. I say, I saw these truths; but, of course, I only mean that, when pointed out to me by Catholic writers, I assimilated their teaching. And here I wish emphatically to repeat that in the whole description of this Progress, I am but trying to place for others the stepping-stones that helped me in my journey from the house of bondage to the land of liberty. Sometimes I have altered their shape, at others left them as I found them.

I had heard much concerning that antithesis of subject and object which Herbert Spencer tells us can never be transcended while consciousness lasts, and on account of which he thinks it impossible for us to have knowledge of the ultimate reality. But the doctrine of the

Trinity seemed to solve the difficulty by revealing God, not only as sovereign thesis and perfect antithesis, being object as well as subject, but also as the infinite synthesis of both. Unity without multiplicity precludes intelligence, for to know implies thought; and without a duality of subject and object, thought is impossible. If, then, there were in the Infinite no multiplicity, there could be no intelligence. It would be for itself as if it were not. Action, too, seemed excluded from the Infinite if multiplicity be excluded, for action implies both subject and object, and the negation of activity could but land me in the "unreality" of Hegel, in which Being and non-Being are identical—in which a thing can both be and not be at the same time. The study of the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity opened up many channels of Catholic thought.

After a while I called on Father Gordon, and begged him to lend me some more Catholic books. In reading of the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity I had learnt many things besides. More clearly than ever, I realised that the conception of a personal God, who is the creator of man, necessarily involves that

of a divine purpose and of the manifestation of that purpose in time. Month after month passed, more and more I sought contact with Catholics and with Catholic teaching, and more and more I wondered at the new world revealed to my gaze.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### UNITY IN VARIETY—THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

THE more I saw of the life of the Catholic Church and the laws which governed it, the more clearly I perceived it to be something differing, as I have already said, not only in degree, but in kind, from any human organisation. I found that it is permeated with supernaturalism, saturated with miracles, that Unity, Sanctity, and Catholicity are of its very essence, and that in it alone is realised on earth that unity in variety I had vainly sought elsewhere. The unity of the Church was to me a fact so stupendous that I could find no natural cause to account for it. I had been a Protestant, and seen how powerless was Protestantism to maintain unity of thought among the members of a single family; and when I saw the vast world-wide unity of the Catholic Church, I realised that He who founded it could not have been as other men,

and that some power was at work which was more than human.

At my request Father Gordon lent me "Les Œuvres Philosophiques de M. Nicholas," and Cardinal Newman's "Grammar of Assent," and these helped me. More and more clearly the teaching of the Catholic Church unravelled itself to me, and more and more clearly "the sweet Galilean vision" unfolded itself before my eyes. The Rev. Mother of the Helpers of the Holy Souls had asked me to teach the Catechism to a little lad who was preparing for his first communion. I think she set me the task thinking I would learn more than I taught, and she was right. I found that the Catholic Church made familiar to that little child doctrines concerning God and man, the soul, immortality, and ethics, that the greatest thinkers of olden times had strained their minds in vain to grasp. In the Catholic Catechism I saw the solution of many a problem which had puzzled me. Guided by others I saw summed up in the answer to the question, "Why did God make you?" the true meaning of many a page of Herbert Spencer, a meaning he himself had missed. "To

know and love God in this world, and to be happy with Him in the next"—so runs the answer; and in this light I saw that Herbert Spencer is right when he sees in the useful the very essence of the good: right in teaching that the test of goodness is the pleasurable tendency of the act, though wrong in viewing the act in the light of its temporal rather than in its eternal results. Yes, every act adapted to its ultimate end is good; in very truth if union with God be the end of man, then the more perfect the adaptation of the means to the end the higher the conduct; and the act which brings the highest ultimate pleasure and happiness is the most virtuous. Huxley says that "in seeking the line of comfort we find the line of conduct," and though this is utterly false if temporal comfort only be contemplated, it is entirely true if ultimate happiness be considered; even though the way to ultimate comfort may lie over the rocks of self-sacrifice and through the brambles of self-denial.

Reason, aided by the teaching of my childhood and enlightened by grace, had brought me to the knowledge of the self-existent, essential

good, the source of all truth, and I saw clearly that mind and body owed Him their homage. Yes—I saw that man was the altar on which creation should offer sacrifice, resuming as he did in himself all the elements. It seemed clear that if there was a revelation made from God to man, it must be sure and true; and if God sent us a messenger it must be one who would not teach falsely; that if the Eternal Truth sent us a guide it must be one who would not mislead. Reason and common sense told me that if there existed a teacher sent from God, that teacher must be infallible; and alone among the systems of the world, the Catholic Church claimed infallibility—alone acted as if conscious of its possession. Then, too, the wondrous unity of the Catholic Church seemed to me a stupendous fact which nothing could explain away. There was something unnatural, something unearthly about the unity of the Catholic Church which impressed me greatly, and for which no natural explanation seemed adequate.

My study of philosophy had taught me that in all ages philosophers had craved, and craved in vain, to find unity in variety. My expe-



rience had taught me that in other churches and systems disunion and uncertainty reigned supreme. How then account for the marvellous unity in variety to be found in the Catholic Church, a unity that held in a common faith people of every nation, and kindred, and tongue? Bewildered and impressed, I determined to study her teaching and read her history. I re-read the Gospels, and there I found recorded the foundation of this mighty power which had survived the ages, this Church which in its very cradle all the powers of this world had sought to crush. I realised that He who founded her was the Jesus of whom Strauss and Renan had written ; but a man is known by his works, and the more I saw of the Catholic Church, the more I realised that she possessed characteristics with which no mere man could dower her. She had marks upon her for which no human origin could account. Little by little, the clear consciousness of the Divinity of Christ became rooted in my mind. I have said that belief in Christ was in the first instance in a great measure consequent on the existence of the Catholic Church, yet even now I had no formal intention of becoming a Catholic. Our

sentiments and volitions have an influence on our beliefs, and I think that at times the wish not to believe prevented my seeing clearly the claims of Christianity. I seemed to see them on paper, but saw them dimly in a disjointed sort of way; when I came in contact with Catholics I seemed to be thrown back. I don't know why this was; perhaps I realised what Catholics ought to be, if Catholicism were true, and was disappointed because they did not realise the ideal I had formed of them; perhaps it was because contact with them made me realise the practical results involved in submission to the Church. Little things which would have seemed a matter of course to a more logically reasonable mind, repelled me. I remember the first time I saw the Lenten Indult on the door of the Church in Farm Street signed with Cardinal Manning's name: it was as if some one had struck me. The idea that if I became a Catholic I would have to keep the general fasts of the Church did not repel me—the theoretical idea of authority attracted me; but the thought that any individual would have the right to say in such matters “thou shalt” or “shalt not” made me recoil

and feel as if every nerve of my body tingled in revolt. In its splendid ideal Catholicism appealed to my heart, but in its practical results it caused me to shrink from it; the logical coherence of its dogmas appealed to my intellect, but its tone of authority caused me to rebel against it.

A writer has recently told us that "once the intellect sees the truth of a proposition, it is no longer free to reject or accept it, but rather its freedom consists in blinding and dimming the vision." Perhaps this is why at times I saw clearly the truths of Catholicism and at times lost sight of them. Still, for the most part I knew Catholicism was true, just in the same way as I knew that the facts of history were true; yet I had not faith.

At times I thought of the Church merely as a wonderful organization, a complex instrument for the propagation of certain truths, rather than a living personality and a body indwelt by the Holy Spirit. I thought of her rather as a musical box wound up to play, than as the body of the intelligent Spirit whose voice, issuing forth, maketh eternal melody; as a dead code rather than as a living teacher. Moreover, the

more clearly I recognised the consequences of accepting Catholicism, the less I wished to make the sacrifice Catholicism involved. Still, at no time was it for me a choice between Catholicism and any other form of Christianity, but at best, between a vague belief in a Creator and a definite Catholicism; for me no other form of Christianity was possible, and the very fundamental tenet of Protestantism seemed itself to involve belief in the Catholic Church.

Frances Cobbe points out that if God gave the Bible to man for his guidance, it is impossible that it should have failed to convey to the Christian world the meaning He designed man to receive. "The Maker of the intellect can have made no mistake in addressing the intellect. Those doctrines which the great mass of Christians have drawn from the Bible for eighteen hundred years, must be those which God intended them to draw, or else He did not inspire the book." Now, for eighteen hundred years the majority of Christians have been Catholics; that is to say, either the Bible is not inspired or Catholicism is true. Still, it was not arguments such as this that weighed with me, but the fact that Catholicism differed from all other religions,

not merely in degree but in kind, and alone possessed the characteristics which drew me to Christianity.

I realised that a revelation which was uncertain and indefinite was unworthy of the name, and at no time could I have believed in a Church which was fallible and which spoke in contradictory language.

The Unity and Catholicity of the Catholic Church, her power of concentration and expansion, answered to needs in my own heart which the study of philosophy had but made more definite and real; her embodiment of the principle of authority and the supernaturalism of her teaching answered to certain needs of my intellectual and moral nature and drew me to her. All things human were subject to decay, "the Catholicity of this spiritual daughter of Israel was one of time as well as space; she claims for her origin the Garden of Eden, for her sphere the universe, for her cause the voice of God, and for the fulfilment of her promises she claims eternity." Developed in obscurity, unaided by human means, she had, as Macaulay tells us, "welded together Greek and Roman, Jew and Gentile. She had satisfied the needs

of the learned philosophers and of the ignorant peasant. She possessed a power of adaptation, assimilation, and transformation which was simply miraculous. Extremes of thought and culture met in her bosom, and there blended into unity. Ancient civilization and modern barbarism had hurled their force against her, and each in turn had knelt at her feet. Empires had passed away, yet the Catholic Church stood erect amid the ruins." And if half that Protestant bigots had told me of the wickedness of Catholic rulers and people were true, then had she survived a foe more deadly than all the rest and by that very fact proved her Divine origin. Ever changing yet ever the same, answering in every age the needs of her children, she showed powers of adaptation and organic development which proved her to be as young and vigorous in the nineteenth century as in the first.

I saw modern scientists attempt in vain to destroy her, and end by unwillingly illustrating the truth of her tenets, and bringing their trophies to her shrine. Most of all did I marvel over that power of selection which had caused her to abstain from identifying herself

with teaching which a later age has shown to be erroneous, and pass unscathed through the false theories of succeeding centuries. There were periods when it seemed inevitable that she should have compromised herself by definition of an apparent truth since proved false, yet had she stood the ordeal unharmed and passed over the red-hot ploughshares of falsehood with feet and garments unsinged.

The more I read the more clearly I realised that she bore a charmed life. I do not think that at this stage I always recognised the truth of the Catholic Faith, but I did at all times discern the beauty of the Catholic Church. At times I persuaded myself that emotion and desire had cast a halo round it, that the desire for a revelation had made me believe that one existed; but there were also times when the mere fact that Catholicism satisfied the needs of my heart made me see in it not the mere product of such desire but its legitimate realisation. From the first I had realised that if a revelation existed it must be sure and true, and must provide milk for babes and meat for men; must answer the needs of the most ignorant and of the most cultivated. I saw that it must

contain a message to rich and poor, high and low, the sinner and the saint, and that there must be in it elements of progress enabling it to keep pace with the development of the individual and with the increasing needs of humanity.

The fact that Catholicism answered this ideal not only drew me to it, but at times made me think I had dressed it up in the garments woven by my own mind. Nothing could satisfy me but an authoritative communication coming direct from God, and through the channel of the Catholic Church alone did such a communication seem possible. Still, there was something in me that rebelled against submission to authority, and I had no formal intention of actually becoming a Catholic. The fact that to do so involved obedience and submission, and that I thought it meant loss of mental liberty repelled me from it. Strange, inconsistent, and illogical as it may seem, I must own that while the Church's claim to infallibility alone made Catholicism an intellectually possible religion for me, the practical exercise of its authority made me shrink from the mere thought of becoming a Catholic. On



the other hand, my intercourse with Catholic nuns enabled me to judge of Catholicism by its fruits, and attracted me to it. Many influences were at work, but perhaps the most powerful influence brought to bear on me was that of the little child in the slums who was preparing for his "first communion." Never shall I forget my feelings when, opening the book, I asked that tiny child the aim and object of man's creation, and when with undoubting conviction he replied, "To know and serve God in this world, and to be happy with Him in the next." Philosophers might wrangle, scientists might differ, but this little Catholic child *knew*.

## CHAPTER XIX

### GROPING FOR LIGHT WITH HALF-CLOSED EYES

STILL, though I at times recognised in Christianity the fullest revelation of God to man, and in Catholicism the only logical form of Christianity, I did not become a Catholic. I realised that if I accepted the principles it was impossible to reject the consequences. Catholicism involved consequences from which I shrank, and this obscured my mental vision. Still grace led me on. About this time I read Mr. Mallock's book, "Is Life worth Living?" and was much impressed by the chapter in which the following passage occurs. He says:—

"Viewed from a merely human point of view the Catholic Church is the parliament of the believing world. Her doctrines, as she one by one unfolds them, emerge upon us like petals from a half-closed bud. They are not added arbitrarily from without; they are de-

veloped from within. They are the flowers contained from the first in the bud of our moral consciousness. When she formulated in these days something that has not been formulated before, she is no more enunciating a new truth than was Newton when he enunciated the theory of gravitation. Whatever truths, hitherto hidden, she may in the course of time grow conscious of, she holds that these were always implied in her teaching, though she did not know it; just as gravitation was implied in many ascertained facts that men knew before they knew what was implied in them. Thus far the Church of Rome essentially is the spiritual sense of humanity, speaking to men through its proper and only possible organ. She is all this; but she is far more than this—she is such a parliament guided by the Spirit of God. Just as the human brain is an arrangement of material particles which can become connected with consciousness only in virtue of such a special arrangement, the Church is an arrangement of individuals which can become connected with the Spirit of God only in virtue of an arrangement equally special."

Time passed, and still I remained in a state of indecision. I know my conduct was, at this time, strange and inconsistent. I believed in a Personal God who had revealed Himself to man. I believed that Christianity could alone claim to be that revelation, and I believed that Catholicism was the only logical form of Christianity; yet these three truths seemed to be distinct and separate in my mind. I cannot explain clearly how I felt the concurrent force of various lines of thought. Theistic convictions were rooted in me. I believed in the possibility, the probability, nay, the absolute certainty of a Divine revelation, and I knew that Catholicism alone contained the characteristics essential to such a revelation. In a vague kind of way I knew that Catholicism was true, yet I was not a Catholic. I had longed all my life to know the truth; I had vainly sought it in the workshop of human reason, and now I found it in God's revelation to man. Yet now I shrank from it. I knew that for me no other religion was even possible, yet I hated the idea of becoming a Catholic. On paper I saw the beauty and consistency of the Catholic Faith, yet, if ever I thought of

becoming a Catholic it was as if a cold hand had been laid on my heart. Having realised the finite powers of my reason, and being logically convinced that God had given a revelation to man, and that Catholicism was that revelation, I had no reasonable course but to assent freely to whatever that revelation contained; yet somehow I could not become a Catholic. I had dwelt so long in the chill gloom of misty doubt, that I shrank from the light.

I had wandered so far along the path of intellectual license that I dreaded lest knowledge of the truth should take from me "freedom" to believe error. This seems utterly absurd; yet George Eliot tells us that "the private right of general haziness is part of the treasured inheritance of every Englishwoman." The Church spoke with the present voice of Divine authority, and from her teaching there would be no appeal; this truth repelled and attracted me. Had she not spoken with authority she would have been no Church for me; a Church which was not infallible struck me as unworthy of God and useless to man. Yet though I was attracted to her because she

was the organ of truth, I shrank from her because she was the guide of conduct. I was at times glad that she should teach me what to believe, but not that she should command me how I should act. My intellect was convinced, but my will refused to yield. I knew that if I became a Catholic it would involve the snapping of ties which were very dear to me, and would alter the whole plan and purpose of my life; but I do not think it was chiefly these sacrifices which deterred me. I think it was rather because the gate of the Church is low, and he who enters there must bend the knee.

I had been told by Protestants that the unity of the Catholic Church was not so real as it appeared, and this I determined to test, glad to clutch at an excuse for delaying my submission.

I loved going to Farm Street and the Oratory, and ceased going to any other church. I was warned against the "sensuousness" of Catholic worship, but I realised that man is not merely a rational but also a sensuous being, and that he must worship God with his whole nature. I saw that the God-given religion

would be one that appeals not only to his spiritual but also to his corporeal perceptions, and that one which had for its central feature the Incarnation would "neither ignore the soul nor treat men as if they were disembodied spirits."

I went to German, Irish, and English priests, to ignorant men in the back slums, and cultured women in the West End, and found that in matters of Faith the unity was absolute and perfect. I visited convents and institutions, and saw a spirit of charity unrivalled elsewhere. On one occasion a friend took me to Roehampton, where she went to see the Superior, who was a relative. Mother Kerr was too ill to see me, but I had a long talk with a nun whose name I forget, but whose words impressed me anew with the supernatural life of the Catholic Church. I was quite convinced that the Catholic Church shed the fullest light on the problems that vexed me. I thought that light came from God. Theoretically I believed that the Incarnation was true, and that the Catholic Church was the Church founded by Christ, yet I could not become a Catholic.

One day I had a long talk with Father Coleridge, and he lent me Cardinal Manning's "Temporal Mission of the Holy Ghost." That helped me; yet somehow the more clearly I saw the truth and the more reason forced me to become a Catholic, the more my will turned me from becoming one, as if to assert her freedom of action and to teach me that conversion is a moral as well as an intellectual act. Man is composed of moral and mental faculties, and it is the whole man who must be subject to the law of Christ, the whole man who must receive His word. This, I think, was the reason why mere arguments, however convincing, failed to make me a Catholic.

Plato said that in order to convert a materialist it was first essential to reform his life, and the idea that conversion is rather a moral than an intellectual process seemed the primary idea of every priest I consulted. They told me that in prayer, and in effort to do right, I would find enlightenment, not in arguments or controversy. "It is to those who keep His sayings that Christ has promised that the Father, the Light of lights, shall



lead them to the truth. Practice Christianity and you will realise its truth; obey Christ and you will realise His Divinity"—this seemed the burden of their teaching. Yet in spite of this they ignored none of my difficulties and refuted my arguments, while urging me to seek light in prayer rather than in study.

A friend who thought that Mgr. Capel would be able to help me, invited me to meet him, and a long interview was the result, but no priest ever helped me less. I say this, because it shows how differently people affect others. My friend thought his influence irresistible; but somehow in the presence of Cardinal Manning, Father Gordon, or Father Best, I felt my own ignorance and my own unworthiness and thought of what they were saying, but in that of Mgr. Capel I thought only of displaying my own powers of argument—I thought of myself. Perhaps this was because I had heard so much about his irresistible power that my obstinate nature was in arms. I do not know why it was, yet, though he was most kind, he failed to help me.

All this time I knew that if there was a revelation from God, it was to be found in

Christianity. I realised that the Founder of Christianity had while on earth neither written a book for the propagation of His religion nor caused one to be written; that He had founded a Church and given her certain characteristics by which men might know her; that these notes were Unity, Sanctity, Catholicity, and Apostolicity; that she was to be One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic, and that the Catholic Church alone possessed these notes. I knew that the Founder of this Church had made her a promise that she should be hated and persecuted, and that all manner of evil should be spoken against her; and I knew that the Catholic Church alone possessed the fulfilment of this promise. I saw that over her head, as over that of Christ, the love of her children and the hatred of her enemies united to form a triumphal arch, yet I held back. I wanted to find the truth, but I did not wish to find it in the Catholic Church.

The unity of the Church, and the hatred men felt for her were two facts that staggered me, and made me feel there was something unnatural about her—something not of this world.

People little thought who lent me bitter books against Catholicism how much they were helping me to become a Catholic, for the blind unreasoning hatred with which she is attacked was one of the things which impressed on me the fact that she was no human institution. Men would not thus have hated the work of their own hands. Moreover, by emphasising the frailty of the human elements of which the body of the Church was composed, they emphasised the supernatural origin of the spirit by which she was indwelt. Had none but the good obtained admission to her fold, and none but the perfect been her Pontiffs, then might she have seemed to owe her undying life and marvellous fruits to merely human means, but by showing that her rulers had been weak and sinful men of like passions with ourselves, they revealed "the Power behind the Pope," which preserved her life from decay, her doctrine from error, and her moral teaching from the shadow of imperfection. They took away the only explanation of her wondrous life which natural causes could afford.

## CHAPTER XX

### APPEAL TO MR. MACKONOCHIE AND DR. PUSEY

ABOUT this time a High Church friend who did not enter into any of my difficulties, but who had long regretted my want of belief, begged me to consult Mr. Mackonochie of St. Alban's. She noticed that I no longer went to what she called "infidel lectures," and that I frequented Catholic churches, and she thought the moment opportune for landing me in Ritualism. I consented. I would gladly have avoided the sacrifices which Catholicism entailed. Still Ritualism seemed to me a feeble illogical imitation of Catholicism, and I had not much hope that Mr. Mackonochie could prove it otherwise. If God had sent me a guide it must be one who would not lead me astray; if He had sent me an ambassador to teach me, it must be one who would infallibly teach me truth. No infallible erring Church could satisfy my needs. But I went. I asked Mr. Mac-

konochie for a rule of faith by which I should know the truth, one equally suited to rich and poor, learned and ignorant. He told me to read the Prayer Book and interpret it by the writings of the early Fathers.

Then I asked why I should consider the early Fathers as infallible, and why the Church of the fourth or the ninth century had greater authority than that of the nineteenth. But he seemed vexed at the question. I then told him that I lived in Dover Street, and that Mr. Capel Cure, the clergyman in whose parish we lived (St. George's, Hanover Square), taught that the bread and wine were in Communion taken as a simple memorial of Christ's death, and asked him what he thought of such teaching. I understood him to say that this was rank heresy, and that the bread and wine became the Body and Blood of Christ. I then asked him why I should accept his teaching in preference to that of any other Anglican clergyman. When I asked him how I was to know which was right and which was wrong, he could give no answer that satisfied me, no rule of faith that applied to all.

It was the old story of an appeal to the

early Church, the old story of a Church which had failed, a Christ powerless to preserve in purity and truth that teacher He had commissioned to "teach all nations." I left Mr. Mackonochie wondering how any one could be content with such a creed, and how it was that tens of thousands both cleverer and better than I could accept it. To me it seemed illogical and unsatisfactory; to me it was simply impossible to believe in a fallible guide or trust one who had gone astray. To believe that God had come on earth on the day of Pentecost, dwelling in the Body of the Church that He might lead them into all truth, and yet to believe that He had failed to do this, allowing division and discord to dwell in the temple fashioned for His habitation, was to me impossible. I might find it hard to believe that the Holy Ghost had thus come, but I found it impossible to believe that He had come and then gone away or failed to fulfil His mission. The more I thought, the more clearly I realised that for me there was, if I retained my belief in God, no other alternative but the alternative between a God known only through nature and the God revealed by Catholi-

cism ; between a God manifest in nature and One who manifests Himself to humanity through the Catholic Church.

My High Church friends were not satisfied with the result of the interview, and several of them begged me to talk matters over with Dr. Pusey. Of course I was glad to do so, and went to Oxford. He was engaged when first I called, and I did not see him. I wrote a letter asking him certain questions concerning the rules of faith in the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches, pointing out the discordant nature of Anglican teaching, asking how an ignorant, uneducated woman was to know the truth, and stating the contradictory views concerning the Eucharist with which I came in contact. He mistook me for one of my sisters who frequented the Church of St. Alban's, Holborn, and sent me the following answer :—

“MY DEAR MISS ——,—I did not hear of your calling twice. The best way is to write to me beforehand. You unfortunately came on a day in which I was engaged to the utmost. . . .

“The personal infallibility of the Pope was,

you know, vehemently disputed against at the Vatican Council. Two hundred Bishops were at one time against it, yet, according to the acknowledged truth that there can be no new faith, it must, according to them, if faith now, have been faith then.

“For our laity the Prayer Book tells us what is the faith in the English Church, according to the saying, ‘The law of prayer is the law of faith.’ The Church could not teach us more emphatically than by putting it into our own mouth.

“For the difficulties which you mention, the word ‘sacrament’ is used in two ways. The definition of our Catechism lays down what are necessary to salvation, when they can be had. In a wider sense, one of the homilies calls marriage a sacrament. Orders are spoken of as a sacrament, so is absolution. If you mean according to the old definition as visible signs of invisible grace, there are more than two sacraments. The two great sacraments, by the one of which we are made members of Christ, and in the other our Lord gives Himself to us, are separated off by the Fathers in the same way as in the Catechism.



“You cannot study diligently our communion service without seeing that it teaches the Real Presence. I have dwelt on this in a book, ‘The Real Presence the doctrine of the English Church,’ with a vindication of the reception by the wicked and of the adoration of our Lord Jesus Christ truly present. You would also find a good deal in the theological defence prepared for the Bishop of Brechin on the Articles generally. I should hope that you mistook both parties; that one did not say that it was ‘mere bread and wine,’ or that the other told you to worship the outward veils of His Presence. Christ is truly present, but there is no illusion of the senses. The senses are not deceived in what is the object of the senses although they cannot report to us our Blessed Lord’s Presence. Any ‘ignorant uneducated woman’ can know all which is necessary for her salvation to know. The poor have a great deal of real faith. ‘Could I receive my Lord with my cap on?’ said a poor man who uncovered his bald head in a draughty cottage at a sick communion.

“I rather imagine that you yourself received from God a very definite faith, and are im-

patient of having it contradicted. I have met with many such, but I never met with one who was in perplexity about his or her own faith.

"I believe and am sure that God will lead into the whole truth those who wish to be led. I was myself, so was J. Keble and the rest, taught the whole truth through our Prayer Book, and this all our teachers are bound to acknowledge, so that if any one contradicted it he condemns himself. . . .

"I do not know by your Christian name to which Miss —— I am writing. God bless you.—Yours very faithfully in Christ Jesus,

"E. B. PUSEY."

Before going to see him I wrote to him again. I can't quite remember what I said, but I think I tried to show him my whole mental state, told him I believed in a personal God, my Creator and my Judge, that God's nature being Intelligence, Power, and Goodness, I was convinced that, as He had given to man the craving to know Him, so had he satisfied that desire; that not only did the nature of God and the needs of humanity seem to necessitate

a revelation, but the facts of history seemed to show that one had been given; and that I was well-nigh convinced that the Incarnation was true, and that God had sent His Son to unite human nature with the Divinity and to perpetuate that union by means of the Catholic Church, which not only professed to be the teacher of truths above human reason, but to continue the work of the Incarnation by means of Holy Communion. I stated to him my utter inability to see in the Church of England aught but an "ecclesiastical department of the Civil Service," or, as Cardinal Newman calls it, "a Civil establishment daubed with Divinity," and declared that if the Catholic Church consisted of contending branches each denying what the other asserted, then was its origin human and not Divine. If there was no Church which was really One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic, then had Christ failed in the task He undertook, and I for one could not believe Him to be Divine. In the hour of His Passion Christ had prayed for the unity of His Church and had staked on that unity the proof of His own Divinity: "That they may be one, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

He had promised that His Church should be led into all truth, and that error and schism should never prevail against her, and I could imagine no more complete collapse of such a promise than would be given by the divergent teaching of a Church of which the Anglican was a "branch." I told him that, if the Church founded by Christ were composed of "branches" contradicting each other, it no way answered my needs; that if Christ had founded a Church which was to be One and Holy, and if that Church had become divided and corrupt, then was Christ not God, and that I could sooner believe in no guide sent by God than in a guide which was fallible and could mislead us.

I summed up by saying that it seemed to me that either Christ was not God and no Church existed, or that the Roman Catholic Church had a right to our obedience. In answer to this epistle he wrote me the following note:—

"MY DEAR MADAM,—As I am not, I believe, acquainted with your mind except as far as I can gather from your two letters, will you

allow me to ask whether the object of your letters is to find an excuse to join the Church of Rome? Some of the things which you say are so sadly irreverent to Our Blessed Lord, that I cannot believe that you are in earnest about them. You could not have put them seriously even as hypotheses. There is not the slightest doubt that every one can have the faith that Christ gives and will accept if he or she wishes it and is tractable.—Your faithful servant,

E. B. PUSEY."

Later I paid Dr. Pusey a visit, and from him received kindness, but no help. I do not quite know how to express what I mean, but I felt that, kind as he was, he did not understand me in the very least. I felt that he thought me very wicked for having questioned the Divinity of Christ. Heavy on my heart lay the burden of doubt, and I felt that no such weight had ever crushed him. No leeches of scepticism had ever sucked his life-blood, and he could not understand the phantoms that haunted my brain. Had I gone to him sorrowing over a grievous fault, I would have had his kindly and abounding sympathy; but as it

was, he seemed merely to view my doubts as unrepented sins, and not at all as difficulties; nor did he help me to overcome them. When the question drifted to the claims of the Anglican Church to be considered a part of the Catholic Church, I could not see his position, nor could he see mine. He was too good and too learned to be able to understand me; I too ignorant of Church history to understand his arguments. Of ancient manuscripts and forged decretals, I knew nothing and cared less. The authority of ancient manuscripts did not appeal to me. Perhaps the fact that I had for years lived in a new country where everything is modern predisposed me to regard modern facts as more convincing than historical proofs derived from ancient documents. The fact that the Catholic Church exists to-day with all her wonderful characteristics was to me a far stronger proof of Christ's Divinity than any record of a former age. Even admitting the inspiration of the Bible, it seemed inadequate for my needs unless supplemented and explained by a living teacher having Divine authority to apply that teaching; and if this was true of the Bible, it was still more true of the writings

of the Fathers, for which no plea of inspiration was raised.

I shall be always grateful to Dr. Pusey for the trouble he took, always proud to have known one so learned and good, but he did not help me. In reading his letter you will note that he regards a "new definition" as an addition to the faith; yet surely the Apostles' Creed consists of definitions which were at one time "new," and many of which were hotly opposed. You will also note that he seems to have believed as Catholics do concerning the Blessed Sacrament; for they also hold that there is no deception of the senses, and that it is the substance of the Bread and Wine which is changed, whereas the accidents or phenomena remain. On the other hand, Consubstantiation may have been what he intended to teach. At the time I cared little about such distinctions, and I had mentioned the divergent views rather as impugning the authority of the teacher than because of the doctrines taught. At this time I sought rather the ground-work than the superstructure of religion, the basis of faith rather than the faith itself, the reason why I should believe in any religious doctrines

at all rather than the details of the faith I should hold.

Time passed, yet I did not become a Catholic. What I believed to-day, I doubted to-morrow. There were some beliefs so rooted in my mind that nothing disturbed them, but for the most part I was tossed to and fro, influenced by every teacher I heard. At times I thought the Church to be a mechanical organ, for the preservation of certain truths once committed to her; at others deemed it the mere embodiment of the conscience of humanity, made by men rather than for men. Yet I never lost sight of the fact that the Catholic Church was a thing by itself—never quite lost the conviction that either this was the revelation from God to man, or there was none.



## CHAPTER XXI

### A VISIT TO NEWMAN

It was some time after my visit to Dr. Pusey that I sought an interview with Cardinal Newman, nor shall I ever forget my first visit to Edgbaston. Not liking to travel alone, I persuaded one of my sisters to go with me, and well I remember the journey.

She, I think, had guessed the object of my visit, and brought with her an anonymous pamphlet on Catholicism, probably as an antidote.

She gave it to me to read in the train, and it certainly was the most absurd tissue of misrepresentation I ever had the misfortune to read; I knew too much of Catholicism to be influenced by it, and tossed it back with a laugh, saying—

“Oh, you know, dear, Kant tells us the subject cannot soar beyond experience, and the sum total of my categorised states of consciousness tells me that’s all rubbish.”

I don't know why I answered in that ridiculous way, but it was a jest bearing reference to something that had gone before, not mere priggish phraseology. I knew that the assertions were utterly untrue. I was very anxious to weaken the influence of the pamphlet, as I hoped my sister would become a Catholic, and, deeming it unworthy of serious refutation, answered it by a joke. It may seem absurd for me to say that, though I was still unconvinced, I yet wished my sister to be a Catholic; nevertheless it is true. In the human heart there are inconsistencies one cannot explain, and I can only account for this feeling by the fact that my sister was a Ritualist, and that Ritualism seemed to me but a sham and a compromise, or at best a sorry halting-house. Perhaps also there was in my mind an underlying conviction that in the end I should recognise the Catholic Church as the Teacher sent by God.

Here let me say in a parenthesis that after I was received into the Church that pamphlet pursued me. On one occasion my mother, of whose conversion I had great hopes, brought it to me, saying, "If this be true, I cannot

become a Catholic; a Church which can sanction idolatry so gross cannot be God's Church."

"Who gave it to you?" I asked.

"Mr. Russell of St. Alban's," she replied. Then I told her the statements were utterly false, and begged her to ask him for the name of the author. I felt a great reverence for Mr. Russell, and knew he would not willingly mislead. Next day she returned, saying, "I am afraid it must be true, Mr. Russell says Dr. Littledale wrote the pamphlet, and surely he would not give his name to what is untrue." I sought Dr. Littledale, and I rather fancy he mistook me for my High Church sister, but I do not know. The following conversation took place:—

"This is your pamphlet, is it not?"

"Yes; how do you know?"

"From Mr. Russell. Can you tell me any details of this monstrous confraternity of which you write? Do you know whether it is canonically erected and sanctioned by the Pope?"

"That I do not know."

"Can you tell me the name of the Bishop in whose diocese it was established?"

"No, I'm afraid I cannot tell you that."

"Perhaps you can give the name of the priest who had to do with it?"

"That I do not know, but the fact is that some ladies in the north of France got it up, and the parish priest, disapproving of it, asked the Bishop to prevent their using the prayers, and the Bishop said he would not interfere—thus, you see, sanctioning it."

I said I did not see that that conclusion followed, but begged for the name of the Bishop or the place where the event had occurred, or at least the name of one of the ladies concerned.

Alas, these particulars he could not give, and then, with a burst of confidence, he told me that he had read the "facts" in a French newspaper. I begged the name and date of the paper, but that, too, he had forgotten.

He regretted his inability to give me further information, and I then told him that the absence of information was all I had either expected or desired, and went away.

When I reached home that night, I wrote out a detailed account of our interview, and sent it to several papers, amongst others, the *Church Times* (I did not know he was its

editor), the *Church Review*, and the *Guardian*; but the only paper that inserted it was *Vanity Fair*. I sent a copy to Dr. Littledale, but he vouchsafed no reply. By such "Plain Lies" is Protestantism bolstered up.

I have wandered from my visit to Cardinal Newman, nor can I tell you how forcibly I was impressed by him. Never have I so realised the personality, or been so affected by the strength and reserve power of any man. There was a grand simplicity in his manner that both charmed and awed me, and, though at first he seemed severe, his kindness soon put me at my ease. He appealed to no ancient documents, discussed no remote historical questions, but spoke to the voice of conscience within, to that voice which is the "consciousness of God;" and, leaving controversy on one side, he "emphasised the recognition of my duties as Divine commands: he pointed out that *ought*, not *must*, was the cry of conscience, and that its voice testified not only to the liberty of man, but to the existence of an External Authority who had the right to impose moral obligations." It was of conscience he spoke to me, rather than of revealed

dogma. He spoke to me of it as a voice revealing the sanctity of God, a revelation not only of His power and wisdom, but still more of His personality and love. I ventured to ask Dr. Newman how he explained the apparent triumph of evil over good, and the sin and misery abounding. I cannot remember exactly what he said, but I know he made me see in these very things proofs of the truth of Christianity. He seemed to recognise in Christianity not merely "a voice breathed into the ear of humanity by the voice of its supreme dejection," but the God-given answer to all the needs of man. He took his stand on the goodness of God, and from that standpoint unravelled my difficulties; given the goodness of God, and the sinfulness of man, Christianity alone, he said, reconciled the problems of life, alone fitted into the puzzle of this world where every pleasure has its alloy, every joy is partial, and sin and misery abound. I cannot remember his exact words, but I know that in his presence I was awed into silence, and all my difficulties seemed to vanish. I seemed to see in the sin and misery of the world a reason why God should have

made a way of escape for those who had sinned, and I seemed to see in Christianity the way that He had made, and for me Christianity was equivalent to Catholicism. He did not try to ignore the existence of evil and suffering, nor did he try to water it down; he frankly owned it was a difficulty, and, as far as I can remember, said it was beyond our solution. The calm way in which he—the great giant thinker—faced difficulties and owned them incapable of solution, gave me a deeper sense of his faith and trust in God, and of the truth of his religion and belief, than any learned arguments or plausible explanation of difficulties could have done. There was no attempt to bolster up weak points or to explain away problems, but just a sort of fearless certitude and trust.

The God of whom he spoke to me was no mere causality which existed in the past, but an All-Holy Judge, no “mere energy acting in space,” no mere existence which dwells in a far-off heaven, but an ever-present, ever-acting God, who speaks to men in the low still voice of conscience; no “*effroyable solitaire vivant dans un égoïsme infini*,” but a God of

love, One who is "not merely power and wisdom, but who is holiness," and to whom we have to give an account; not an absentee God, "deaf to our prayers and blind to our misery," but a God who loves the creatures that He made. It has been said by Mr. Wilfrid Ward, "Conscience seemed the basis of all his convictions, duty the keynote of all his teaching," and that "in the sense of duty he seemed to seek the roots of faith;" this expresses, more clearly than any words of mine could do, the impression he made upon me during that memorable interview. When I spoke to him about free will, he reminded me of the awful responsibility that its possession involved, and bade me ponder on that rather than on proofs of its existence; he seemed to speak rather to my moral than to my intellectual nature; his words penetrated to my very soul.

Our interview was a long one. In the middle of it he left me to meet his brother Francis, with whom, he told me, he had not spoken for many years. Of course I attempted to go, feeling I had already trespassed too long on time so valuable, but he would not hear of it, and asked me to remain until after



his brother left. I did so. During his absence I was a prey to much contending thought. Francis Newman's work on "The Soul," which had at one time made an impression on me, seemed to stand out for a moment, then vanished as the great Cardinal's calm and convinced utterances revealed its hollowness. After a while Cardinal Newman returned, and stayed some time longer with me. We talked of many things. I even ventured to remark that some one had said that he regretted the step he had taken in becoming a Catholic. He gave me a copy of his letter to the Duke of Norfolk, and, with words strong with the force of deep conviction, made me realise his intense happiness and his thankfulness and gratitude to Almighty God for having called him "out of the city of confusion into the land of peace and the home of the Saints." When the time came for me to leave, he gave me his blessing, and somehow I felt that "virtue went out of him." Never before had I been impressed by the grand personality of any man, and never again, until I knelt at the feet of the Pope, did I understand what it was to be overawed by human greatness manifested by perfect sim-

plicity. I have known many the world esteems great, but never, except in those two instances, have I been really impressed by them.

That interview helped me more than I can say; still I held back, fearing lest I should lose my liberty of thought, dreading the restraints which Catholicism would involve, and at times doubting whether I had indeed found the Truth. I knew "the Catholic religion is the worship of sorrow and the Cross is its standard, that in every other form of Christianity suffering is an accident to be deplored and avoided as much as possible, but that in the Catholic Church suffering is the battle-cry. She is the Spouse of the Crucified, and the jewels of His espousal are persecution, outrage, and calumny." From these I shrank. I told myself that, perhaps, some day I should be a Catholic; but I had been told by others that I could not really know Catholicism in its true colours until I had seen it in a Catholic country, and I seized on this as an excuse to defer the day of my final decision. I was not really much influenced by this idea; the characteristics which attracted me to the Catholic Church were independent of time and place. Her unity in variety, her

power of concentration and expansion, and the logical cohesion of all the tenets of her faith were independent of the conduct of the inhabitants of this country or that.

I was told that the Catholic Church had added to the teaching of Christ, but that did not weigh much with me; it seemed to me probable that in the revelation made through the Church, as in that made through Nature, God would exercise "a Divine economy;" that as He does not daze the reason of man by making known to him from the first all the truths of science and all the laws which govern the Universe, but gives him the page of Nature and lets him learn gradually to read it, so, neither would He at once manifest either to the individual or to the race the fulness of the truths contained in the faith once delivered to the Saints, but leave to His Church mere germs of truth, with power to evolve and manifest them according to the growing needs of humanity.

I knew that the teaching of Christ was not stamped by Him on the pages of a book, it was planted by Him in the hearts of men; that He had promised that His Church should be as a grain of mustard seed, destined to become a

mighty tree. I think Darwin's teaching helped me to see in the growth and evolution of the Catholic Church a sign that it was formed by the same God Who made the material world. I think that his teaching prepared the way for the teaching of a Church which lays stress on the evolution and development of dogma. I knew that Christ practised a "Divine economy," that He had spoken in parables, had concealed the fact of His Transfiguration, and had told His disciples that He had many truths to tell them, but would reserve them until they were better able to appreciate them; and I saw that, if Catholicism were true and its teaching expanded as time went on, it would but prove that as God acted in Nature, and as Christ had acted on earth, so the Holy Spirit was acting in His Church.

Still, I told myself that I had gradually subjected myself to Catholic influences, and that I would go away among strangers. So I persuaded my mother to go to Paris. She saw that I was restless and unhappy, and acceded to my request.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE PILGRIM IN PARIS

CONTENDING thoughts swayed me in this way and that: I was told that Catholicism could only be seen in its true light in a Catholic country, and that if I saw it in France I should no longer wish to become a Catholic; but *corruptio optimi pessima* had been a very favourite quotation of Archdeacon Evod's, and I was not so illogical as to suppose that any number of abuses should make the slightest difference in my estimate of Catholicism, or to expect perfection in all the members of a Church of which Judas had been a Christ-appointed priest, and in which he had held the position of Bishop and Apostle. Indeed, I saw clearly that if the human will were truly free, and, if the Church were truly Catholic—the Church of the learned and of the ignorant, of the sinner as well as the saint—then were abuses inevitable, and her teaching sure, not

only to be transgressed by some, but to be imperfectly carried out by others among her children. You know the story of Boccaccio's Jew who was sent to Rome in order that the human elements in the Church might counteract his leaning towards Catholicism, and who returned a Catholic because of them, seeing clearly that the Church whose doctrine and moral teaching could remain pure and unspotted in spite of such human frailty and wickedness in high places, must indeed be Divine.

Thus, too, I had learnt to reason, and indeed, if I may say so, express myself; it was rather the essential nature of the Church than its external manifestations that drew me towards it. Moreover, I saw that the weaker the human elements that compose the Church, the more clearly does its life and character necessitate Divine guidance. I realised that the Church was not merely of the cultured few, but also of the ignorant multitude; the Church in which "the spiritual yearnings of the greatest saints and the contrite sighs of the greatest sinners" are offered up at the same altar; the Church where, side by side with costly jewels and treasures of art, are often found the

hideous paper flowers of the humble village maiden, whose offering of love is perhaps the more precious in God's sight. If this were so in material things, I wondered not that a like diversity might exist in practices of devotion. In France, far from being disedified, I saw on all sides, among those who were loyal children of the Church, a spirit of faith, hope, and charity unsurpassed elsewhere. Since those days I have wandered in many lands, and I have learnt to see something to admire even in those childish superstitions which often grow side by side with fervent faith, "weeds blossoming in the rich soil of the garden of the Church." I have grown to realise that "if in the rich garden of the Church weeds sometimes spring up, it is well to remember that even weeds sometimes have beautiful flowers; and the wise gardener, though he will not sow them, yet will often leave them there for a while rather than injure the young plants round which their roots are entwined, and whose tender leaves they may shelter from the blighting winds of scepticism,"—will in fact obey the Master's commands, and "let the wheat and tares grow together until the harvest."

Week after week passed. I heard one after the other the French preachers of the day, was enthralled by the eloquence of Père Monsabré, listened to the teaching of Père Didon, yet did not become a Catholic—still I haunted Catholic churches, and there alone I found rest.

The unity of the Church stared me in the face. Here I saw the curse of Babel reversed, and men of every nation speaking with one tongue. I tried to persuade myself that I had an intellectual battle to fight, but in verity it was a moral combat. I had come to Paris where none knew of my difficulties, for I realised that the soul must go alone into the wilderness to fight the supreme battle. Plato teaches that wisdom is to be found in the solitude of one's own heart, and St. Theresa was soon to teach me that there we find God.

In Paris I found free-thought carried to its logical consequence. The French Librepenseurs, more logical than their English brethren, taught that the pursuit of pleasure was the sole purpose of life. I found them maintaining self-love to be the highest good, and that alone to be evil which thwarted man's temporal desires. It was then that I saw



in all its unutterable repulsiveness the logical alternative to obedience to authority—then that I first recognised the terrible truth of the saying of Renan, *Un monde sans Dieu est horrible*. Yet I did not immediately become a Catholic. Why I held back, I cannot say. Catholicism presented difficulties, it is true; but I knew that they were neither so many nor so great as those which I should encounter were I an Atheist or an Agnostic. Christianity was identified in my mind with Catholicism, and I felt that I ought to become a Catholic; indeed I knew that I should find neither content in my aspirations, nor victory in my strife, until I did. When Catholicism was attacked by others, I could argue stoutly in its defence, and often the words, “Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant,” occurred to my mind with a thrill of fear. But still there seemed a barrier between me and the truth, and I did not see it clearly; still I dreaded lest Catholicism should spell loss of liberty, and shrank from it.

I felt that if I did not become a Catholic, I must protect myself against the Catholic faith, as Kingdon Clifford had seemed to do,

by intense hatred of revealed religion. But I could not. I saw that, the finite and the temporal being unable to bridge over the chasm between God and man, a hand must be stretched out from the Infinite and Eternal. I realised, moreover, that even an Infinite Bridgemaker could not bridge over the abyss with finite materials, but that the bridge itself must be infinite — “The Way Divine.” I realised that between the finite and the infinite, between time and eternity, there could be no link unless one having its roots in both. Indeed it is in this, I think, that the great difference lies between Protestantism and Catholicism; one teaches that God came on earth, taught the truth, went away leaving a creed, a system, or a book in His place: in the other He is the Way, the living abiding bridge between earth and heaven—not a bridge once built and then destroyed, not a Christ who saved the world and then left it, but a Christ who abides substantially in that Church which is the pillar and ground of the Truth and who speaks through his Vicar, whose infallibility is the very mortar by which the stones of that pillar are held in their respective places.

I saw that the true religion must teach men worthily to worship God, that sacrifice was an intrinsic idea of all worship, that a priesthood was essential to sacrifice, and that in the supernatural, as in the natural, order, hierarchy is essential to strength. I had learnt that the ideas of incarnation, of priesthood, were imbedded in all ancient creeds, and I now learnt that the ideas of expiation and of transubstantiation were to be found in every land. It was pointed out to me that man, resuming in himself all the elements of creation, can offer them to the Creator, but that, being finite, they cannot be a fitting offering. Catholicism alone pretended to offer to God an adequate service. If Catholicism were true, the Sacrifice of the Mass would provide an infinite offering to God, a sacrifice which is identical with that of Calvary, and which both embodies and is the antidote of that universal law of suffering and of death which permeates the world. If Catholicism were true, the Mass enabled man to offer to God a sacrifice worthy of His acceptance. By the Mass alone could man offer Him adequate worship, and an idea so grand and so tremendous as that of the Sacrifice of the Mass alone gave a

worthy conception of the worship of the Infinite. Indeed, at times it seemed to me that the very idea was so sublime that none but a God could have conceived it, and that the religion which contained this sublime idea was thereby proved to be revealed.

Other religions professed to tell us of a God who is in heaven, Catholicism of One who is here, "close to the human will and close to the human heart ;" other religions professed to tell us about God, Catholicism to teach man how to obtain union with Him here as well as hereafter. Not only did Catholicism teach man to worship God, but by the Eucharist it professed to unite the creature with the Creator, and thus answer to all the needs of humanity.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### A HEAVEN-SENT GUIDE

IT was on the feast of St. Catherine that I went to the Church of St. Augustine. Vespers were ended; in the pulpit stood a Dominican friar, clad in the same white habit I had seen in ——. The preacher began by asserting the concord of Faith and Science, and maintained that real contradiction between them was utterly impossible, for the Creator of the Universe and the Author of Revelation are one and the same, and all Truth is revelation of the God of Truth. The laws of Nature are God's laws and the voice of the Church is God's voice, and He cannot contradict Himself.

He pointed out that difference can exist without antagonism and union without identity, and that science and religion are but two aspects of the same Divine revelation, and their harmonisation is but as the blending of the different colours of "the one white Truth." I cannot

remember the words he used, but he showed that reason and faith are two rays of light proceeding from the uncreated Light, the one from below "radiating from the intelligibility of things," the other shining from above from the Eternal Wisdom, who planned all and made all, understands all and is the light of all; that the direct light "perfects the reflected light, and corrects the aberration caused by the created medium." In all he said there was a note of fearlessness, a deep-rooted conviction that the fiercer the light that beats on the teaching of the Catholic Church, the more will it manifest the depth and beauty of her dogmas.

The preacher pointed out that, as the artist left his mark on his work, so, too, on the great picture of Creation might be seen the impress of God, who had traced His lineaments on the whole face of Nature, and especially on man: pointed out the purposiveness manifest in Nature, attributed it to the presence and power of mind, and recognised that mind as one which has all the elements of what we know as personality in ourselves: he spoke of God, and showed that faith in God, alone, solved the riddle of existence. He then proceeded to give a picture

of St. Catherine, strong in faith, confronted by the scientists of the day, standing before the great and the learned in the far-famed city of Alexandria, to defend the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity. He spoke of the Catholic doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, and of the way in which the Church had battled with heresy and vindicated the Divinity of Christ; showed that, from first to last, St. Catherine's love had centred round the Crucified, and that her heroism was an outcome of that love.

I do not know that his sermon contained anything I had not previously heard, yet the teaching came home to me with new meaning. I realised, as I had never done before, that Catholicism is no theory of creation, no mere logical deduction, no problem to be solved by the intellect alone, but devotion to a Person, union with a living God. There was in that sermon something which touched my heart, that tore a veil from my eyes. "*Le dernier effort de la persuasion est de faire croire aux hommes ce qu'ils croient. De même que nulle force chimique ne peut tirer des corps que les éléments qu'ils renferment, de même cette grande*

*alchimie de la persuasion ne peut susciter dans notre esprit que des vérités indigineuses."*

And so this sermon seemed to draw out all I had ever learnt or believed, and presented it to me with new force.

Benediction followed, and, when the Blessed Sacrament was raised on high, a change came over me. I seemed to see the Church as the goal towards which my soul had been unconsciously striving, the solution of all my difficulties, the answer to all my doubts. And, having thus seen, I could no longer blind my eyes. I beheld the Church as having body, soul, life, personality, and a living voice: as a teacher sent by God, a mother and a guide, being in very truth a Person whose body may consist of human elements, but whose soul is the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. I had been convinced before; in that hour God gave me faith.

It is said that there are moments when one's whole life passes in review before the mind: with me, in that hour, the inward processes of years passed before my mental vision. I realised that God had created me for an eternal purpose, that He had made that pur-



pose known, that He had revealed Himself to man, and had appointed the Catholic Church as the guardian and exponent of the revelation He had made. I realised that obedience to God involved submission to the Catholic Church, and that on this submission depended my happiness both here and hereafter. I saw this, and I saw the Church not only as a channel of truths, not only as a guardian of certain dogmas to be handed down, not only as a teacher commissioned by God to impart and explain these truths, but as a Moral Personality, a Body indwelt by the great Revealer, revealing to men the love of Christ, and applying to the souls of men the merits and the redemption won on Calvary.

From that hour I was, at heart, a Catholic. Before, I seemed at times to see flashes of the light, and then almost to forget that it had shone. From that hour it burned with a steady flame, and even when obscured by clouds and faintly visible, I still realised its presence.

I do not know how long I knelt there, but when I rose to go, grace had conquered, the frost of my scepticism had melted before the

rays of the tabernacle, and my resolution was taken.

I made inquiries, and found the preacher to be the Rev. Père Etienne, a friar of the Dominican Convent in the Faubourg St. Honoré. The next day I called upon him, and told him I wished to become a Catholic; that I still had difficulties, but that I believed the Catholic Church held their solution.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### IN SIGHT OF HOME

I SUPPOSE that most converts think that God has led them for their reception into the Church, to the priest who could best help them, and I am no exception to the rule.

The spirit of the Dominican Order is a spirit of light and liberty; the French province of Dominicans is permeated with the spirit of St. Dominic, and Père Lacordaire has stamped his character upon it—a burning zeal for souls is the heritage of its sons. And so the Père Etienne took endless trouble in teaching me and making me study. It was well that he did, for during the days that followed every difficulty I had ever had rose before my mind, every dread of Catholicism, every doubt of revelation, every temptation to turn from truth; but, though they came, I knew them to be temptations. Before they had come clothed as angels of light, calling themselves “Love

of Liberty" and "Freedom from Superstition," and I had been deceived by them; but now I saw through their disguise, now I knew them for what they were, phantoms cast by the mirage rising from the stagnant waters I had passed on my journey. Still the Père Etienne wished me to shut my eyes to no difficulties, to smother no doubts, but rather to kill for ever the germs of unbelief that had incubated in darkness by turning on them the full blaze of Catholic truth. He told me to bring forward the doubts that had suggested themselves to my mind and to try and remember those that aforetime beguiled me, and said that he would deal with them—and he did.

One by one I spoke to him of the false theories with which I had come in contact, and he refuted them, showing me that all error is but a distortion of the truth. The agnostic theory that we can know nothing is but a distortion of the great truth that we cannot know everything. Pantheism is but a distortion of the truth that we should see God in all things and all things in God; the teaching of materialism that all life and all thought is the product of matter, distorts the truth that

matter is the instrument of human life and human thought. Schopenhauer's doctrine that the will to live is evil, and that self-affirmation is the greatest sin, is but a distorted caricature of the Christian truth that Love, which is the highest virtue, finds its most perfect expression in self-sacrifice for the good of others; that God is the Supreme Affirmative—the I AM WHO AM—and that He, not self, should be the motive of human action. The will to live is supremely good if only it be raised high enough, and life immortal be its goal.

The Père Etienne began from the beginning, and, showing me the trustworthiness of human reason, emphasised the truth that we can recognise facts the first hand discovery of which would have been impossible. He laid stress on the folly of doubting the certainty of the knowledge within our grasp merely because vast depths elude our reach; of saying we can know nothing of a thing merely because we cannot know all about it. He asserted the existence, both in the moral and intellectual spheres of those self-luminous and evident truths which are the very axioms of thought, and showed me that these apodeictical truths

are not the result of conscious reasoning, but truths on which it is unnecessary to reason, and which are the basis on which all reasoning must ultimately rest. Mr. Herbert Spencer tells us that "a certainty greater than that which any reasoning can yield has to be recognised at the outset of all reasoning," and this truth the Père emphasised. He pointed out that in those ethical and intellectual conceptions which are independent of time and space, mathematical demonstration is impossible; nay, that the very fact that a thing can be proved is a proof that its certitude is not of the highest order, for if you prove a thing the facts on which you base your arguments themselves require proof, and you must go back and back until you meet those apodeictical truths which are incapable of proof and require none, for seen in their own light they are more certain than any proof could make them, and on these must all reasoning ultimately rest. He took those truths I had never lost and showed me Catholicism as their logical outcome. He showed me that belief in God involved belief in revelation, and that belief in revelation involved belief in the Catholic Church.

He showed me how carefully the Catholic Church has safeguarded the rights of reason ; that though she declares its spheres of action to be limited, she yet proclaims it Supreme Ruler in its own domain. He proved to me that reason is capable of proving with certitude the existence of God, the soul's spiritual nature, and human freedom ; it is also capable of examining the credentials of the Catholic Church and proving her to be the bearer of a message which contains truths which are beyond reason's ken. If, having proved the reliability of the messenger, reason refuses to accept the contents of the message, she stultifies herself, yet oftentimes "pride and passion so blind the mind that it fails to recognise its own signature." "A reason that will not accept its own paper is hopelessly bankrupt," and such bankruptcy may easily lead to mental suicide. I had long realised that I could not expect to see the whole until the end is reached, and I now saw clearly that to throw away the truth God has revealed to us, because we cannot know all truth, is like refusing to slake our thirst because we cannot drink the ocean, or casting from us the Koh-i-noor because all diamonds are not ours, and we have but a

taper by which to examine its perfections. I saw the utter madness of denying the power of reason and casting from us its conclusions because its sphere is limited.

Père Etienne told me that he would set before me the motives of faith and the credentials of the Church, and said that it was the duty of my reason to verify the credentials and weigh the evidence; but he reminded me that, once satisfied, it was the duty of reason to bow before the authority it had proclaimed. With a mind aglow with earnestness he disproved my errors; in a way that made misunderstanding impossible, he refuted my arguments; and with faultless logic he showed me that submission to the teaching of the Catholic Church is the highest act and exercise of reason, an act that enfranchises the intellect by emancipating it from the thralldom of error. Over and over again he told me that into this act of intelligence there must enter the co-operation of the will, which has its part to play as determining cause. He first made it clear that reason and will and feeling are but manifestations of the spirit of man, the unity of whose self-



consciousness is a fundamental fact, and then showed me that only by their co-operation can the generation of legitimate certitude be accomplished. He emphasised the fact that faith is the gift of God, that God will not force this gift on any man, that its acceptance is no mere assent to an intellectual proposition, but an act of the whole spirit of man; one involving the unity of his self-consciousness and therefore demanding the co-operation of reason, feeling, and will. Moreover, he pointed out that—I use the words of Frances Cobbe—“faith is a thing we can only gain by prayer, only keep by obedience; there is no winning it by arguments, no preserving it by logic in a life of sin.” In religion God demands the homage of man’s whole nature, and the heart and will have their part to play as well as reason; nay, “inasmuch as love and goodness are more than knowledge, so is their part the greater.”

Above all he sought to make my faith a reasonable faith, and to make reason the basis of my belief in God, and in the authority of God’s Church. From first to last he sought, not to glorify authority at the expense of

reason, but to establish authority on the basis of reason; for though it is not in the power of reason to understand the mysteries which God has revealed, it is the duty of reason to establish the authority on which they are to be received. Revelation can contain nothing contrary to reason, but it contains truths to which unaided reason cannot attain; it was not given to cramp the intellect or compel the will, but to make known truths above reason's ken. The recognition and acceptance of revelation are the highest acts of the whole spirit of man, a spirit the unity of whose self-consciousness renders impossible the division of feeling and will from reason in the perfect acceptance of truth. These acts are so exalted that man cannot accomplish them unless aided by, and under the guidance of, Divine Grace. Submission to the authority of the Catholic Church, far from being the abnegation of reason, is the most exalted of intellectual actions.

In England, where converts are many and priests few, such long instructions as Père Etienne gave me would have been impossible, but he never seemed to grudge the time he

spent, and with patience and charity unravelled all my difficulties and made the truth so clear that from that time the ideas of Self-identity, Duty, God, Revelation, Christ and the Church have been inseparably linked together in ever increasing union.

I had always talked much of freedom, just as a sick man talks more of health than one who possesses it, and the dread of losing my intellectual liberty had long been a stumbling-block. The fact was now brought home to me that the true liberty of the creature consists in the conquest of those obstacles which hamper its development, in the attainment of perfect obedience to the laws which govern its being, and in the consequent realisation of the highest possibilities of its nature. Every being seeks to complete itself, and the freedom of a being consists in its power to attain this end. Man is a finite being who has a spiritual and intellectual nature, and his self-realisation involves the realisation of his need of an Infinite and Intelligent Spirit, by whom he was created and on whom he depends; his freedom therefore consists in his power to attain his completion by union with his Creator. From this

it follows that all those conditions that narrow man's life and make it self-centred, impede his liberty, and all those that eliminate undue self-love, and help him to merge his desires in the will of God, tend to his freedom—a liberty to be attained only through the struggle to realise Ideals under the guidance of the Absolute Reality.

I realised, therefore, what nonsense I had formerly talked about freedom of thought, and moreover, I saw clearly that no external act can trammel thought whose essential law is obedience to its limitations and whose limitations are knowledge and truth. The more ignorant I am of a subject, the more free am I to think what I will concerning it. When once I know a truth, the very fact of that knowledge limits my thoughts; I can no longer think the world the fairyland I once deemed it. I am no longer free to believe a thing to be a man once I know it to be a tree. An African nigger is free to doubt the existence of the city of London, or the possibility of sending messages by electricity: an educated man has no such freedom. All science is intolerant of that which contradicts it, for truth excludes

falsehood, and knowledge of a subject either scientific or religious restricts a man in his judgment concerning it. But the realm of truth is infinite, and each truth attained is a stepping-stone which reveals to man's slow and limited vision a larger number of truths, a wider view of the domain of truth. Therefore though in one sense knowledge narrows the domain of freedom, in another it widens the actual field of thought.

## CHAPTER XXV

### NEW LIGHT ON OLD PUZZLES

IN the end Père Etienne showed me the Catholic Church as the true home of liberty and freedom, and proved to me that by obedience to her teaching, true liberty is attained. He talked to me not so much about Christianity as about Christ; of Christ not only as the teacher and example, but as the Logos, the substantial and Incarnate word of God—the bridge between the finite and the infinite. He showed me the Incarnation, not only as an isolated fact happening in time, but as an idea dwelling eternally in the mind of God; showed me “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,” as the centre from which all truths radiate. He “entered those avenues of the human mind which are not amenable to the guide books of logic,” told me of one to whom the mysterious recesses of the human heart are open, and who, Himself essential Personality,

is the source of all personal existence ; showed me the Incarnation as the outcome of God's love and Catholicism as the outcome of the Incarnation. Remembering that "*le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas*," he sought to win my heart to Christ as well as to teach reason to bow before the authority itself had proclaimed to be divine.

He revealed to me the Christ not only as a Divine Teacher, but as a motive to right conduct, an object of love, for whose sake men would practise virtue.

He showed me how Christ had loved the world, and how He alone of all humanity had been able to secure undying love, a love whose ethical force leads men in every age to leave all that they may follow Him, and makes them dread neither the rigours of Carmel nor the mortifications of La Trappe, neither the hermit's cell nor the martyr's stake, neither suffering nor self-sacrifice, if by these means they can draw nearer to the object of their love. "*Ama et fac quod vis*" was the only rule of life the Père proposed ; love was the solution of every problem and the motive and object of every action. In order to awaken this love he

revealed to me the Christ, God made man, close to the living heart, close to the human will—lifted up before my eyes Him who being lifted up draws all men unto Him.

Each day he gave me a definite instruction, and when it was over he told me to raise any difficulties and express any doubts I felt. These he explained and removed, dwelling on the Divine character of Christ's mission, on the intrinsic perfections of His message to man, and on the existence and character of the Catholic Church. He showed me the Church as she really is, and proved to me that her infallibility so far from engendering bondage, is a life-buoy which enables those who cling to it to venture fearlessly as explorers into the deep waters of speculation that are perilous to those who have no such support.

Over and over again he warned me that the credibility of the messenger, not the apparent reasonableness of the message, must, in the first place, be the motive for accepting the teaching of the Church. He warned me of this, but urged me to study the doctrines of the Church, to explore the vast realms of truth which faith had made my own, by faith



to possess myself of the land, and then by the light of reason to survey the glorious heritage of which I had become possessed.

The Divine commission of the Church was the authority he gave me for the doctrine she taught; her infallibility was the guarantee of their truth.

The days passed, and one by one the doctrines of the Church were explained to me. Believing that God has revealed Himself to man, and has established on earth a Church as the guardian and exponent of that revelation, then it followed that that Church must be infallible, and that I must believe whatever she taught. This I saw clearly; but there was one very simple doctrine that puzzled me, because I entirely misunderstood it; it was the baptismal regeneration of infants. Why so simple and reasonable a doctrine should have been the last to become clear, I know not, but as it was the first tenet of Christianity that I had rejected, so it was the last to receive my intellectual assent. I had given the human will so prominent a place in all my calculations that it was not easy to comprehend a regeneration in which the will of the

creature did not co-operate with that of the Creator; and, moreover, the doctrine had long been associated in my mind with uncatholic ideas incompatible with the justice of God.

I knew the Church to be infallible, reason and logic told me that if taught by an infallible CHURCH, the doctrine must be true, and yet, misunderstanding it, I shrank from it. I knew that the Church must be right, for her voice is the voice of GOD, and I knew by sad experience the truth of the words of Bacon, who tells us that "if we are disposed to survey the realm of sacred or inspired theology we must quit the small vessel of human reason and put ourselves on board the ship of the Church, which alone has the Divine needle for justly shaping the course." I sought an explanation of the doctrine, knowing well that whatever the CHURCH taught must be true, and found that the Church teaches no such doctrine as I thought was implied by the words baptismal regeneration.

She teaches that infants who die unbaptized are happy with a degree of natural happiness far higher than that attainable on earth, and that God, having given them all and more than

justice requires, gives to others on certain conditions a supernatural nature and supernatural joys. This, of course, presented no difficulty; even here on earth God dowers His creatures unequally, and to deny Him the right to give free gifts to men, is to deny Him His very Godhead.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### GROWING ILLUMINATION

As Catholic doctrines were unfolded to me, I saw the Church not only in the broad outline of her personality but in the light of her utterances. For weeks I had seen the Church as a moral personality, and had learnt much that is taught by her. In past days I had seen a blurred and indistinct image, but now she stood out as one having both a human and a divine life; no mere ark in which I sought refuge from the storm of doubt and unbelief, but a living personality, ever changing yet ever the same—an organism of which unity and variety are the vital forces, extracting from the surging sea of human opinion those chemicals with which to develop the truths photographed by Christ on the film of her inner consciousness, to make manifest and bring more and more vividly to light those truths which in the potentiality of their fullest development were

from the first impressed on her mind—truths which, as the ages roll, will gain in detail and *definition* until the perfect picture shall appear. Christ Himself tells us His Church was planted as a grain of mustard seed that was to become a mighty tree. As the seed is to the sapling, so is the Church of the first century to the Church of to-day; as the sapling is to the mighty tree, so is the Church of to-day to the Church of the future. You cannot sever the sapling from the seed; you cannot sever the full-grown tree from the sapling. Organic unity binds each to each; the same vital force produces each from each. The vital force which produces the organic unity of the Catholic Church is the Soul, by which her Body is indwelt, and the Soul of the Church is the Third Person of the Ever Blessed Trinity, the Teacher of Everlasting Truth.

Once I recognised the personality of the Church, that was to me not only the explanation of its undying life but also of all its wondrous effects. I no longer merely believed the Church to be the Church of God because I saw that it had marks for which no human origin could account, and because it embodied

that unity in variety for which the mind of man has ever hungered, but I saw the Church as a moral person, and the personality of the Church as the result of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Since then Mr. Wilfrid Ward, a writer to whom I owe a deep debt of gratitude for intellectual help, has made it even clearer to me that the Church is a living reality evolving with the ages, and has taught me to realise more fully that what the Body of Christ had been to the Eternal Son of God, that the Body of the Church, in one sense, is to the Holy Ghost, just as the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity had, as God, been in the world from the beginning yet came in a special manner on that day on which He stooped to take to Himself a body which grew and developed partook of human weakness and human infirmity, and suffered agony and death. So the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity had been in the world from the beginning, yet came in a special manner on that day of Pentecost. On that day He took up His abode in the Body prepared for Him by Christ—the Body of the Church. This Body grows and develops with the progress of humanity.

It is composed of sinful men, partakes of the evolution of the race, is ministered to by the discoveries of science, and may in one sense be said to grow in wisdom and knowledge and in favour with God and man.

Just as our Divine Lord first spoke in the language of childhood, and when grown "in wisdom and stature" spoke in that of manhood, just as He used the language of the age in which He lived, so at all times does the Church; and she does this that, couching her teaching in the popular, philosophical, scholastic or scientific terms of succeeding ages, she may bring home the eternal verities contained in the original deposit of faith to the minds of the men of each generation in such a way as they can best understand them.

In spite of the waste and mutilation of the members of Christ's body, the voice that spoke from Calvary was as divine and infallible as that which taught in the Temple. So, too, in spite of the faults of the members which compose the body of the Church, the voice of the Holy Spirit which issues from it is at all times divine and infallible—the expression of

the soul within. The fact that the Church possesses not only the power of preserving the original deposit of faith, but of expressing it with ever increasing lucidity and applying it to the growing needs of mankind, is the work of the Divine Spirit by whom she is indwelt. I saw the Church in her absolute unity coming down through the ages ever one and the same. I saw her applying her teaching to the varying needs of men. I recognised in her that perfect unity in variety which philosophers had told me was the highest manifestation of truth and beauty, and I knew her to be the Divine Teacher.

I saw the Church as a living teacher teaching a living Faith, and in this living Faith taught by a living Church I saw the glory and power of Catholicism, for I saw that this evolution is the work of the Holy Spirit who unfolds, as the powers of man render possible, and the needs of man render opportune, those truths implicitly contained in the Faith once delivered to the Saints. There is—there can be—but one Church, one Body indwelt by this Divine Personality, and this has lived in the world since the day of Pentecost. This Church



is ever organically one; her dogmatic teaching is ever unchanging and unchanged. "She acquires no new features, possesses no new revelation, but teaches in the present as in the past those doctrines which she will continue to teach until the end of time;" yet she is guided by the Spirit within to the explicit definition of those truths which she has possessed from the beginning, and unfolds them with ever increasing lucidity.

To talk of error in the dogmatic teaching of the Church was I saw blasphemous, nor could I even imagine that a Divine Teacher could err—the Church become divided or corrupt. The infallibility of the Church seemed to me a necessary consequence of its existence, the expression of the soul within. Once I grasped this truth and saw things in its light, it was impossible to doubt anything the Church taught, and it was self-evident that to reject the least important of her dogmas was to deny her very existence. When once I had seen her as she really is, it no more humiliated me to submit my understanding and will to her teaching than it would have done to submit to God Himself, if the heavens had opened

and He had deigned to speak directly to me. When once I had seen the Church as the body through which the Divine Spirit, who is Eternal Truth, teaches mankind, all else was easy. I realised that from her dogmatic teaching none could legitimately withhold the entire submission of the intellect or of the will, and that towards her no attitude was reasonable save that of loving reverence and childlike obedience.

Long since I had thought it folly to appeal from the Church of the nineteenth century to the Church of earlier ages, but now I saw that it was blasphemy. Long since I had seen that *if* the Church had authority to teach in any age, she had it still; but now I recognised her as a living authority who had a supreme right to my faith and obedience. I saw in Catholicism the answer to all my difficulties, and, having once seen, I could no longer blind myself.

I had read and re-read the cutting of *The Enquirer*, which had given me my first glimpse of Catholic dogma, and its teaching was stamped into me.

To have difficulties about this or that doctrine

seemed to me absurd, for they all rested on the same authority.

I now found that these dogmas were but aspects of God's personality as made manifest through Christ. Nothing has been revealed to save man from the exercise of reason but certain truths which are above reason's ken, and which are the axioms which make it possible for humanity to solve the "riddle of the universe." I realised that it would be as unreasonable of me to deny these truths because my deductions from them did not square with facts as it would be to reject the multiplication table because my accounts did not balance.

Even apart from the authority of the Church, many doctrines in which some found difficulty presented none to my mind. For instance, from the first, devotion to Mary seemed to me concomitant with belief in the Divinity of Christ, and I could not understand any Christian thinking adequate, still less excessive, any homage rendered her because she is the mother of Christ. To believe in the Incarnation, and yet refuse to Mary the highest place in creation, seemed to me utterly inconsistent.

Her prerogatives seemed to flow naturally from the fact of the Incarnation. I believed the Immaculate Conception, and other truths concerning her, because they were taught by the Church, but at the same time, even had the Church not explicitly taught them, it would I think have been difficult to me to believe that she, who was from all eternity destined to be the Mother of God, could ever have been under the dominion of Satan, could ever have been tainted with original sin. Directly I understood the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, directly I understood that all that is claimed for Mary, is that she, through the anticipated merits of Christ, was exempt from original sin, the dogma seemed, if I may dare so to speak, almost a matter of course. I was I think far more prone to believe that all new-born babies were born immaculate and were "dear innocent little souls," than to think that the Mother of God could ever have been stained with sin, and under the dominion of evil. Nay, once I believed in the Divinity of Christ, the very thought of sin in Mary seemed a reflection on Him who is the Author and Source of all her Perfections, seemed an

insult to Him who deigned to call her Mother; and the most fervid expressions of devotion to Mary seemed inadequate to express the love Christ would have us feel towards his immaculate Mother. That any one could believe that she was predestined from all eternity to be the Spouse of the Holy Ghost, and the mother of the Eternal Son, that Christ dwelt for nine months in her womb, was nourished and educated by her, and was for thirty years subject to her, and yet deny her perfect purity, seemed to me incredible.

As I have already pointed out, a fallible Church seemed to me no Church at all; it seemed a merely human organisation, and did not answer to my needs. I needed a teacher sent from God, and could not imagine one who could teach error or mislead, neither could I believe in a visible Church which had no visible head through which its thoughts could be formulated and its ideas expressed. A body without a head seemed to me a corpse or a monstrosity.

If the body was infallible so too must be the head. As far as I was concerned, the infallibility of the Pope needed no proof and

was involved in the very nature of the Church; indeed, I could not even imagine a visible Church answering to my needs which had not a centre of unity, a mouthpiece through which to express its mind, a visible Ruler and Head.

It seemed to me impossible that God was God and yet had not revealed Himself to man. Christianity seemed clearly the only adequate revelation He had made. Christianity in its legitimate form was Catholicism, and Catholicism involved an infallible Church with an infallible Head. For me "without the Pope there was no Church, and without the Church there was no Christ, and without Christ there was no God" who answered to my needs.

The certitude promised by the Catholic Church had doubtless been my first attraction to it, but for a long time the Blessed Sacrament had drawn me to the fold. I had felt that a Catholic Church was unlike any other spot on earth. Nor did the Church's teaching on this subject present any difficulty to me. I had learned the meaning of "substance" and "accidents," and once I understood that the presence of Christ was substantial, not pheno-

menal, the doctrine presented no difficulties; for I knew that pure substance being a single entity, has no phenomenal dimensions, and occupies no space, being whole and entire under each and every modification. Moreover, the fact that the Blessed Sacrament was not under its own but under foreign modifications presented no difficulty. I had read a good deal of philosophy, and though my ideas on philosophical subjects were very confused, still, when the Catholic doctrine was explained to me I saw that it presented no contradiction, nor did it deny the evidence of my senses. I had long been taught that the being of a thing is distinct from the sum of its attributes, and felt no difficulty in believing that when the substance of the Bread and Wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Our Lord, the accidents still remain. Of course I know that this teaching clashed with much that I had read in the pages of Mr. Herbert Spencer, but his teaching seemed to have made no lasting impression on my mind. I at one time thought that the Catholic Church taught that after the consecration of the Blessed Sacrament there is a deception of

the senses, but I now knew that she teaches that the senses truly recognise that which is the object of sense—the phenomena of bread and wine. It is the “substance” which is changed and which is the object of faith. I had long learnt that the substance does not fall under the sway of the senses, that it is the “thing in itself” which eludes their scrutiny, and the doctrine of the Corporeal Presence of Our Lord presented no difficulty to my mind, while it seemed to answer the needs of the heart and to reveal a God whose love is truly infinite.



## CHAPTER XXVII

IN PETER'S BOAT I REACH THE SHRINE AND  
FIND TRUTH AND FREEDOM

I HAVE said that many of my friends found difficulty in doctrines which seemed to me to be included in truths they themselves accepted. Such for instance was that of the possibility of modern miracles. Perhaps the effect of distance may make it easier to some people to believe in God's intervention in the past rather than in the present, but I must say it struck me as supremely illogical and absurd to believe that miracles happened in past ages, yet were impossible in the present day. If miracles had ever happened I could not see why they should not happen now. It seemed to me supremely illogical and absurd to believe that the dry bones of Elijah could bring the dead to life, and the handkerchief of Peter cured diseases, yet deny the *possibility* of the miracles at Lourdes. God was still God, nor

had His power grown less : man was still man, and his need to the testimony afforded by miracles seemed even greater than heretofore ; therefore miracles seemed to me not only possible but as much needed as ever. Indeed, the fact that the Catholic Church alone claimed the power to work miracles and cast out devils, seemed to stamp her as the only possible heir of the apostolic ages. There had been a time when I disbelieved in all miracles, and talked nonsense about "interference with the laws of nature," and at the period at which I write miracles were a stumbling-block to many. Then some forgot that with God there is neither past nor future, but only one eternal ever-present act, simple and indivisible, which would include the law and its exception. The great wave of materialism had not then been broken, as it now has, against the everlasting Rock of Truth. These were the days when man professed to know that all was the outcome of matter. Now the believers in mechanism have had their day, and so too have the scientists who withheld their belief in miracles on the ground that they were violations of the natural law. Now even Huxley

has acknowledged that we know too little of the region of natural law to say that a miracle may not be worked by a law of which we are ignorant, but then it was not so. Fichte has said that "he who is free in spirit will find the explanation of the world in freedom; he who is a slave at heart will find it in necessity"—my very love of freedom prevented any wish to limit the free action of God. To me the existence of the Church with her wonderful Sacraments was a perpetual miracle compared with which all other miracles seemed insignificant.

Moreover, the Père Etienne explained to me the teaching of the Church concerning miracles, teaching summed up in words uttered many hundreds of years ago by St. Augustine. "God," says St. Augustine, "does nothing against nature. When we say that He does so we mean that He does something against nature as we know it—in its familiar and ordinary way; but against the highest laws of nature He no more acts than He acts against Himself" (*Contra Faustum*, xxvi.).

At the time of which I write the natural was to me so intensely supernatural that I was

less prone to deny miracles than I was to fall into the other extreme and ignore the existence and agency of secondary causes. I had changed much since I fell under Darwin's influence. Then God was to me at best an absentee God, "sitting idle ever since the first Sabbath at the outside of the universe, and seeing it go"—a God external to the world, creative of the world's machinery but letting it work out its own destiny. Now I knew that God was in virtue of His infinitude necessarily immanent in creation and consequently present with all His works, and with a certitude that brooked no distrust I knew that in Him we "live and move and have our being," and by Him the very hairs of our head are numbered.

There was one theme that throughout his instructions the Père Etienne never lost sight of and never wearied of emphasising. It was the love of God, as revealed in Christ and manifested in the Catholic Church. In the love of God he found the only light shed on the riddle of existence, but it was light enough. He warned me against confounding that love with mere goodness or benevolence, and pointed out that just as human love has, at its best and highest, certain characteristics, so are these

essential to and possessed in an infinite degree by Divine love. God is not only loving—He is Love, and desires to be loved in return. He has dowered us with free-will so that we may love Him, and that free-will in which consists our dignity is also, when perverted, the occasion of our fall. He impressed on me that not only is the Catholic Church the realisation and exponent of the highest and purest morality, not only is she the infallible organ of truth above reason's ken, not only does she possess indefectibility of existence and infallibility of thought and utterance, but these are hers, because she is informed by the Holy Spirit, "the Divine wisdom ever dwells after the mode of an 'idea' in the collective intellect of the one Model Person, the individual unity of the Catholic Church." It was the living personality of the Church which solved many of my difficulties. It was the evolution of her doctrines that made me realise her vitality. The doctrine of evolution which Darwin emphasised in the physical, Hegel in the philosophic, and Newman in the theological order, this was the teaching which explained to me the facts of life in the ideal as in the material world. Nowadays that teaching is to be found

on every side, but then it was not so, and it came to me as a dazzling light. I saw the Church not as a mere series of states of consciousness, but as an ego that underlay those states, an organic unity evolving only that truth which she already possessed, a personality whose self-consciousness was the fundamental fact of her life as it is of all lives.

Not only does she manifest to us the will of God, but she gives us union with Him. Through her, Catholics find a God who is not only a lover of souls but whose delight it is "to dwell with the children of men," and whose infinite love and desire find expression in the Blessed Sacrament. The Catholic Church not only teaches us how to attain the object for which we were created, not only holds a motive before our eyes, but provides the means whereby we may accomplish that end. She gives us wells from which to draw water by the way and food to strengthen us on the journey.

God has united Himself to humanity, and wills that through the Incarnation each one of us should unite ourselves to Him in the Blessed Sacrament. He not only took a body and dwelt on earth eighteen hundred years ago in

the person of Christ, but in the person of the Holy Ghost He informs to-day the body of the Catholic Church: through her reveals Himself to humanity, and through her communicates Himself substantially to men. To me the Church was not only the ark in which I sought refuge from the storms of unbelief, not only the home in which the cravings of my heart and mind could alone find satisfaction. It was this and it was more, for I saw that as the soul informs the human body, the body of the Church is "informed and energised by the supernatural, invisible, and permanent action of the Holy Ghost." I not only realised that her utterances are the infallible utterances of Divine truth which can satisfy the intellect, not only realised that she can satisfy the heart of man with Divine food, but I realised that she is the living medium through which Jesus Christ redeems and saves mankind. Not only did the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity assume human nature and dwell on earth in bodily form, not only does the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity dwell in the body of the Church, but the eternal truths of God take form and substance in that Church and are embodied in the Sacraments. God's willingness to pardon

sinner finds substantial life in the sacrament of Penance, the regeneration of man takes form in Baptism. The sanctity of marriage has its visible expression in the ceremony of Holy Matrimony, and through all the Sacraments God's grace is conveyed to the souls of men. Thus truths which in their reality can only be discerned by spiritual eyes are translated by the Church into the language of ideas, and these are garbed in robes visible to the senses so that the most debased may apprehend them and find strength to reform their lives. The Catholic Faith is no mere subjective idealism, but necessitates a belief in those objective truths which are the realisation in time of eternal ideals—ideals which are the supreme reality.

Reception into the Church had become an imperative duty; it ought to have been a supreme desire, but, strange and inconsistent as it may seem, I must own that there were days when my convictions were blurred, and when I dreaded lest I might regret the step and wished to wait still longer.

At last the day of my reception into the Church was fixed. I had held back till the last, dreading the final plunge, hating the self-



examination, shrinking from the inevitable confession, listening to the voice of temptation which suggested that I was making a mistake and might regret the step. But now the hour had come.

Lady Blount was the only person in Paris who knew of my intention. Good and true, tender and wide-minded, saintly and wise, she was the best and kindest friend a young convert could have had. She came with me to the Carmelite Church in the avenue de Messines, where I was received by the Père Etienne.

The Catholic Church is indwelt by an infinite Person who regenerates, absolves, and sanctifies her children; by her I was brought into closest union with "One who hears and understands." I was at peace.

That dull gnawing ache, that vague hunger of the soul for *One* to hear, and understand, that need of an infinite Personality which I had felt all my life had made permanent materialism impossible, and pantheism but as "a shadow of my desire." I think it was this same longing that made a vague Deism unsatisfactory, for a God of whose Personality I knew nothing did not answer to my needs. The doctrine of the Blessed Trinity,

the Fatherhood of God and the Sonship of Christ revealed the Personality of God, and in the life and Sacraments of the Catholic Church I was brought into close relations with that Personality and found Rest. The next day I made my first communion in the Dominican Church in the Faubourg St. Honoré.

Before I had believed, now I *knew*. It is useless to write of the intense happiness of being a Catholic. No words can make it clear to those without the fold, and none are needed for those within. The well-known simile of a stained glass window, viewed from without and from within, may indicate the difference between the broken lights of Catholic truth viewed from without, and the glorious harmony of that truth as seen by a Catholic. But nothing can make a non-Catholic fully realise the peace and joy of the children of the Church; no words reveal those moments when "in the light that radiates from the Tabernacle all mysteries are solved, all dogmas explained, all difficulties vanish." For years I was tossed hither and thither like a weary swimmer in a stormy sea, but now in Peter's ship I safely float, and though around me rage

the winds and waves of the sea of doubt, I fear them not.

Until the very hour in which I became a Catholic I had moments of doubt and dread. Until that hour I at times feared lest Catholicism spelt loss of freedom. From that hour I knew that its true expression was in characters of light and liberty ; that in order to believe we need not close our eyes and shrink from the light, but can open them wide and let the noonday sun of science and criticism shine upon our creed. From that day all doubts vanished, and my only regret was that I had so long delayed taking the final step. Indeed, I wondered why so much instruction had been necessary, since mere reception into the Church produced such intense certitude.

Long years have passed since that eventful day, but no grim spectre of the past casts its shadows across my path, for I have found that certitude I had so long desired, and so fitfully sought after. Biblical critics and students of comparative religion may suggest difficulties on every side, but they are powerless to rob me of my faith ; safe in the keeping of the Catholic Church I can welcome all who search for truth

as friends, since I need no longer fear them as foes. There are some who would fain cut the tree from its roots that it may lean more freely to the side from which they think the light is coming; but severed from its roots it cannot live. There are others who would shelter it from the light lest it wither, but in the dark it cannot thrive. Holding fast to the truths which come from the Perfect Man, and lead to the perfection of humanity, I know that the more brightly shines the light of true science and sane criticism, the more clearly will be made manifest the truth and beauty of the Catholic Faith. Strong in the glorious traditions of the past, and the far more glorious promises of the future, I can study without dismay the problems that perplex the modern mind. Convinced that the moral code of Catholicism is potent to produce the highest development of which mankind is capable, I know that the Catholic Church will express "the Faith once delivered to the Saints" in terms which will harmonise with the highest intellectual development to which humanity can attain. Not putting new doctrines into old formulas, but on the contrary putting the old wine of sound doctrine into new bottles

shaped by modern thought. Speaking the language of the age, and in that language teaching the eternal truths which she has received from the beginning. I know that after the fiercest storm the voice of the mighty Mother will calm the troubled sea, and I am at rest. No longer am I "a wandering sorrow in the land of dreams," but a Pilgrim with the shrine in view; for I know that I have found the truth, and the truth has made me free. From that day I seemed to gain new powers of vision, and could only exclaim, "Having been blind, now I see." The teaching of the Church shines with a radiance not of this world, and it is impossible to me to doubt its Divine origin. I became a Catholic because Catholicism alone satisfied the needs of my intellect and my heart, and in it I found that satisfaction my whole nature desired. The bright rays of truth have shone from God's Church upon my soul; the bitter frosts of scepticism have vanished before the sunshine of that light, and I am at peace. I have found light and liberty. Before all was doubt, now I possess certitude; before I was tossed hither and thither by contending theories, now I possess

freedom from intellectual slavery; before doctrines seemed mere opinions, now they are the expression of living realities; before there were times when I dreaded to think, now thought and action find stimulus on every side. It is impossible to explain the peace and joy, the light and liberty that Catholicism has brought into my life; to those who have it not, I can only say as our Lord said to the woman at the well, "Didst thou but know?" No more fitting words can I find with which to close this account of the infinite patience of God than these of St. Augustine:—

"Too late have I sought Thee, O Ancient Truth; too late have I found Thee, O Ancient Beauty, for Thyself Thou hast created us, O God, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee."

THE END

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